

Dysphagia Diet Level 6: Thickened Soft and Bite-Sized Foods

Diet description

This diet consists of many ordinary foods that are soft and easy to chew. Foods can be eaten with a fork or spoon. Foods are soft and fork-tender; they are moist, but there is no separate thin liquid present. Solid food pieces are 8mm or smaller for children or 15mm (about ½ inch) for adults.

Who needs this diet?

This type of diet is recommended by a provider, dietitian or speech-language pathologist based upon your specific needs. This type of food is for people who may experience the following:

- Mild dysphagia (difficulty swallowing)
- Weakness in the muscles of the mouth and/or throat
- Pain or tiredness with chewing
- Missing teeth or poorly fitting dentures
- High risk for choking

How to prepare soft and bite-sized foods:

Foods in this diet are prepared or cooked so they easily mash with pressure from a fork or spoon. All food must be cut into pieces that are no larger than ½ inch.

- Cut meat, vegetables and fruit into pieces ½ inch or less
- Cut meat or stringy vegetables against the grain
- Thicken liquids to the recommended consistency

Treatment

Often the most effective and immediate treatment for difficulty swallowing is to change the consistency of food or liquid to make swallowing safer. In most cases, softer foods are easier to swallow. Diet changes maybe short-term. The speech-language pathologist will monitor your swallowing and advance your diet when appropriate.

Complications

People with dysphagia (swallowing difficulty) are at risk for choking, aspiration pneumonia and other respiratory problems. These serious conditions can result in sudden medical emergencies or chronic illnesses that affect health and quality of life.

In order to eat and drink safely and get the nutrition you need, it is important to follow your new diet. Your health care team has given you this information as part of your care. Ask your provider, dietitian or speech-language pathologist if you have questions.



This is the size your food pieces should be.

Level 6: Soft and Bite-sized Foods

Food Groups	Safe Foods	Foods to Avoid	Liquids to Thicken
Milk / Dairy	Smooth or fruited yogurt Cottage cheese Sliced or cubed cheese Plain cream cheese	Cream cheese with nuts or pineapple	Ice cream Sherbet Popsicles Shakes/ malts Nutritional supplements Whipped topping
Meat and Protein	Tender, moist, ½ inch or less diced or ground meats Moist fish that flakes with a fork Shell fish Poached, scrambled, fried or soft-cooked eggs Casseroles Meatloaf, meatballs Hamburger, cubed Hummus, bean dip	Whole sausage/hot dogs/brats Fried meats or meats with hard skins Jerky Dry hot dish or hot dish with large chunks Nuts, chunky nut butters Creamy peanut butter Sandwiches Pizza	
Vegetables	All fresh, frozen or canned vegetables that are cooked, steamed or boiled into small pieces Legumes / Beans Potatoes without skin Stewed tomatoes Sweet potatoes, no skin Smooth squash	Raw vegetables Non-tender or rubbery cooked vegetables Whole kernel or creamed corn Peas Potato skins, fried potatoes, hash browns Broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, spinach or other fibrous, non-tender or rubbery vegetables	
Fruit	Canned and cooked fruits (drain excess juice before serving) cut to 1/2 inch or smaller pieces Soft bananas Jellied cranberry sauce Apple / pear sauce Soft, ripe, peeled fresh peaches, nectarines, kiwi, cantaloupe, honeydew, cut to 1/2 inch or smaller pieces Strawberries, mashed or cut into small pieces	Fresh apples, pears, pineapples, grapes, cherries or apricots with skins Whole berries Fruit leather Fruit roll-ups Fruit snacks Stringy fruit, like rhubarb, pineapple or mangoes Watermelon	Fruit juice
Food	Safe Foods	Foods to Avoid	Liquids to Thicken

Groups			
Bread, Cereal and Grains	Hot cereal, oatmeal Moistened dry cereals Pancakes moistened with butter/syrup Sticky rice or rice mix Soft cooked pasta cut into small pieces Slurried bread or bread products	Granola, granola bars, energy bars, rice cakes Cereals with nuts or chunks Crackers Popcorn Chips Bread or baguettes Dry crumbly rice Coarse cereal like shredded wheat Bagels	
Soup	Corn and clam chowder that has been through a blender Soups which are blenderized or have a consistent texture	Corn and clam chowder Soups with chunks large than ½ inch or with inconsistent textures	Broth and other thin soups
Sweets / Desserts	Pudding, custard Moist soft cakes with icing Slurried cookies Fruit pie with soft crust	Desserts with nuts, seeds or dried fruit Coconut Pineapple Sticky caramel, chewy candy Hard cookies Hard candy	Malts Milkshakes Eggnog Popsicles Gelatin Frozen desserts
Other / Fats	Butter or margarine Strained gravy and smooth sauce Salt (if allowed), pepper, herbs, spices Ketchup, BBQ sauce, mustard Honey, smooth jellies, syrup Sugar, artificial sweetener Mayonnaise	Olives Sticky foods	Vinegar Salad dressing