



Eating a regular, easy to chew diet

For patients experiencing pain on swallowing
or difficulty eating a normal, textured diet



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Christie website

For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit **www.christie.nhs.uk** or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

Introduction

Please note that this booklet is NOT suitable for people who have been advised to follow a texture modified diet from speech and language therapy. There will be a separate booklet for whichever level you have been advised to follow.

With some types of illness or treatment you may experience a sore mouth or swallowing problems, which makes eating difficult. In this case you may find foods that are 'easy to chew' are more comfortable and manageable. IDDSI (the international dysphagia diet standardisation initiative) has developed a way of describing foods and drinks that are safest for people with feeding, chewing or swallowing problems. A regular, easy to chew diet is IDDSI level 7.

Foods should be tender whilst also being as nourishing as possible to help you cope with your treatment or illness.

Sometimes the timing and coordination of the swallow may be affected. If you experience any of the following symptoms, then you may have a swallowing difficulty:

- coughing on swallowing diet or fluids
- difficulty breathing after eating/drinking
- wet or gurgly voice after eating/drinking
- pocketing food in mouth
- unexplained chest infections

You must inform a member of your medical team if you experience these, as you may require a referral to the speech and language therapists to assess the safety of your swallow. They will advise you on the safest texture of diet and fluids.

If you have diabetes

The advice in this booklet includes recommendations for foods containing high levels of sugar and fat.

We advise you to consult your GP, dietitian or diabetes nurse for individual advice as some of the recommended foods and drinks may not be suitable for you.

A regular, easy to chew diet

This section is for people who can manage normal foods (regular diet, IDDSI level 7), but of an easy to chew texture. It includes ideas for breakfast, savoury snacks, main meals and desserts. If you are concerned about your weight because you have either lost weight or are struggling to maintain your weight, you may wish to enrich your foods. Please look at the advice about enriching your foods on page 8.

What is the food texture level for this diet?

- normal, everyday foods* of soft/tender texture
- any method may be used to eat these foods (e.g. fingers, fork, spoon, chopsticks etc.)
- food piece size is not restricted in level 7, therefore foods may be a range of sizes. Food pieces can be smaller or bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm
- **do not use foods that are:** hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, have stringy textures, pips/seeds, bones or gristle
- you should be able to 'bite off' pieces of soft and tender food and choose bite-sizes that are safe to chew and swallow
- you should be able to chew pieces of soft and tender food, so they are safe to swallow without tiring easily

- your tongue should be able to move food for chewing and apply pressure until the food is soft and moist enough to be easily swallowed
- you should be able to remove bone, gristle or other hard pieces that cannot be swallowed safely from your mouth without help or direction from others

*May include 'mixed thin and thick texture' food and liquids together – ask your clinician for direction on this.

Who should not have this texture level?

This level is not intended for people where there is an identified increased risk of choking.

People who are unsafe to eat without supervision are not considered suitable for this texture level.

People can be unsafe to eat without supervision because of chewing and swallowing problems and/or unsafe mealtime behaviours. Examples of unsafe mealtime behaviours include: not chewing very much, putting too much food into the mouth, eating too fast or swallowing large mouthfuls of food. Always consult with your health professional for specific advice for your needs, requests and requirements for supervision.

Where mealtime supervision is needed, this level should only be used under the strict recommendation and written guidance of a qualified health professional.

Ideas for meals

Breakfast

- porridge or instant oat cereal made with whole milk or cream. Add sugar, jam, syrup or honey
- wheat biscuits or other breakfast cereals (avoid cereals with dried fruit or nuts) soaked in hot or cold milk. Add sugar, syrup or honey to taste
- yogurt or fromage frais
- stewed or soft fruit, for example, apple, apricots, banana or prunes. Serve with yogurt, fromage frais or cream
- eggs: omelette, scrambled, poached, fried or boiled (make sure the eggs are well-cooked)
- baked beans or tinned spaghetti
- skinless sausages or frankfurters

Try a glass of fresh fruit juice with your breakfast*

Savoury snacks or main meals

- soup: homemade, tinned or packet (to enrich make with milk and top with grated cheese)
- eggs: see breakfast suggestions
- baked beans or tinned spaghetti (to enrich top with grated cheese)
- macaroni cheese or tinned ravioli – top with grated cheese
- jacket potato (no skin) with a filling such as cottage cheese, cream cheese, baked beans, ratatouille or tinned fish (salmon or tuna mashed with mayonnaise)
- corned beef hash
- kedgeree
- savoury mince, casserole or hot pot

- fish in a sauce: (make sure there are no bones in the fish)
- fisherman's pie
- cottage pie, shepherd's pie, chilli con carne*
- cauliflower cheese
- dhal, or other pulse dishes
- vegetable curry
- spaghetti bolognese
- skinless sausage, onion gravy and mashed potato
- dishes made with soya mince, quorn or tofu

Try serving the above with well-cooked vegetables.

*If your mouth or throat is sore, you may wish to avoid foods that are very hot or very cold, salty, spicy or contain vinegar. You may also need to avoid fruit juices.

Desserts

- milk puddings such as rice pudding, semolina or custard
- trifle
- stewed fruit with custard, cream or condensed/evaporated milk
- egg custard, crème caramel
- yogurt or fromage frais
- milk or fruit jelly, instant whip, mousse, blancmange
- ice cream or sorbet
- sponge and custard

Add extra cream, ice cream, honey or jam if desired.

Foods that may be difficult and you may wish to avoid

Food characteristic	Example of food
Hard or dry	Nuts, raw vegetables, dry cakes, bread, dry cereal
Tough or fibrous	Steak, pineapple
Chewy	Lollies/sweets, marshmallows, chewing gum, cheese chunks, sticky mashed potato, dried fruits, sticky foods
Crispy	Crackling, crisp bacon, cornflakes
Crunchy	Raw carrot, raw apple, popcorn
Sharp or spiky	Corn chips/crisps
Pips, seeds	Apple or pumpkin seeds, orange pith
Bone or gristle	Chicken bones, fish bones, meat with gristle
Sticky or gummy	Edible gelatin, konjac-containing jelly, sticky rice cakes
Stringy	Green beans, rhubarb

Enriching your food

Even though you may be eating less, it is important to maintain your weight or regain lost weight. This section suggests ways in which you can make the food you eat more nourishing by adding extra calories using full fat products, sugars and fortified milk.

NOTE: If you have diabetes try enriching your food using dairy/non-dairy produce and fats rather than sugary foods. See The Christie booklet 'Eating well with diabetes when you have a poor appetite'.

Dairy produce:

Such as whole milk, whole milk yogurt, cream cheese, grated cheese.

Add grated cheese to potatoes, vegetables and soups. Add extra cream or fortified milk to soups, mashed potatoes and milk puddings/sauces.

Fats:

Such as full-fat margarine, butter, cream, mayonnaise.

Add to snacks and main meals. For example, add butter and full cream milk to mashed potatoes, to vegetables or to rice pudding.

Sugars:

Such as sugar, honey, syrup, jam.

Add jam to semolina or rice pudding, extra sugar to custard, or syrup or honey to porridge.

Fortified milk:

Mix 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to 1 pint (568mls) of full cream milk.

Store this in the fridge and use whenever you would use ordinary milk, for example, cereals, porridge, soups, milk puddings, drinks. Do not keep fortified milk for longer than 24 hours.

Try to aim for 6 small meals or nourishing snacks each day – suggest breakfast/mid-morning/lunch/mid-afternoon/evening meal/supper.

Nourishing drinks

Try having milky drinks away from meal times as they can fill you up.

- Milky drinks such as Horlicks, Ovaltine, cocoa, hot chocolate.
- Milk shakes with added ice cream.
- Special powdered drinks such as Complan, Meritene (formerly known as Build-up) can replace a light meal when made up with milk, and come in a range of sweet and savoury flavours. Try blending with fresh fruit, yogurt, crushed ice or ice cream for a change.

Some special meal replacement drinks are available on prescription. Ask your GP for advice about these. There is also a Christie booklet: 'Nutritional products' which includes recipes.

Pureed diet

If the above advice has not helped your symptoms, it may be useful to trial a diet used for patients with swallowing difficulties (pureed diet, IDDSI level 4).

A pureed diet is a food consistency that is smooth, without lumps or bits and it:

- is usually eaten with a spoon (fork is possible)
- cannot be drunk from a cup
- does not require chewing
- can be piped, layered, moulded

Foods should be pureed not runny. Using a liquidiser or blender/food processor can help adjust the texture of your foods. You could also use a hand blender or sieve.

If you need financial help to buy or obtain the equipment a social worker can give you advice about this.

To help you manage to eat your meal it can help if your food still looks appetising and attractive. Pureeing meat, fish, potato and vegetables separately can make your meal look more appealing. Colours can also help. For example, try serving brightly coloured vegetables, such as mashed or puréed carrots together with mashed potato and creamed chicken. The tips below may help when preparing pureed meals.

Tips when pureeing foods

- You may find it easier to blend small quantities at a time as the liquidiser then works more efficiently. It may take up to two minutes to blend the food to the correct consistency.
- If using boiling liquids, such as sauces, allow to cool slightly before adding to the liquidiser.
- Rinse immediately after use and clean using warm water and detergent. Be careful not to immerse the base of the machine or any electrical parts in the water.

Cooking tips

- ✓ All meat products must be cooked until very tender.
- ✓ All vegetables must be cooked in water to ensure the vegetables are soft and retain water for hydration.
- ✓ When vegetables are cooked, drain the water off properly.
- ✓ Do not overcook the vegetables to a mash (as this can affect nutritional content, appearance and colour).

- ✓ Creamed potato must be lump-free and smooth in consistency.
- ✓ Ensure all foods are tasted to ensure correct seasoning.
- ✓ Think about the colour of foods for later presentation.
- ✓ Think about taste – avoid duplication and clashes of different flavours.
- ✓ Think about the size of the portions (not too big as this can be off putting, but also not too small).
- ✓ Sieve for pips, seeds, husks, skins and gristle.

What foods can I puree?

Food group	Tips when pureeing
Bread, cereal and potato These are carbohydrate-containing foods, which provide energy.	<p>Bread can be hard to puree. Avoid using freshly baked bread and break the bread into small pieces before adding to the liquidiser. The breadcrumbs can then be frozen. Bread can be soaked in a liquid, e.g. stock to create a puree texture.</p> <p>Pasta should be cooked until soft and then pureed with a sauce. Try a nourishing cream or cheese-based sauce.</p> <p>Potatoes should be cooked until soft and then pureed using milk or cream with butter or margarine. Do not puree for too long as the potato can go sticky. Alternatively, use instant mash made up with whole milk and added cream cheese, grated cheese, cream or butter.</p> <p>Porridge or instant oat cereal or wheat biscuits made up with whole milk.</p>

Food group	Tips when pureeing
<p>Meat, poultry, fish, eggs and pulses</p> <p>These are protein-containing foods, which your body uses for growth and repair.</p>	<p>Fish: Because of the risk of bones it is not recommended to puree fresh fish – however, you could puree boil in the bag fish as this does not generally contain bones.</p> <p>Meat and poultry should be cooked and then trimmed to remove any skin, gristle or fat. Cut into small cubes before puree and add gravy or sauce.</p> <p>Beans, pulses and lentils. These should be cooked until very soft or alternatively use tinned varieties. You may need to puree with a sauce.</p>
<p>Milk and dairy</p> <p>These are calcium-containing foods which your body uses for healthy bones and teeth. They are also a good source of protein.</p>	<p>Yogurt. Choose smooth and creamy whole milk yogurts.</p> <p>Hard cheeses. These can be grated and added into liquidised soups and sauces.</p> <p>Cream, evaporated or condensed milk, yoghurt, custard, ice cream and milk are useful to add to puddings to blend to a smooth consistency.</p> <p>Skimmed milk powder can be used to enrich soups and sauces.</p>

Food group	Tips when pureeing
<p>Fruit and vegetables</p> <p>These foods contain vitamins, minerals and fibre.</p>	<p>Use tinned, frozen or fresh fruit and vegetables.</p> <p>Vegetables can be cooked until soft. Stringy vegetables or vegetables with tough skins, such as peas, runner beans, sweetcorn and celery may not be a smooth consistency and you may want to sieve these. You may also need to add stock or gravy to some vegetables to get a smooth purée.</p> <p>If using tinned fruit, drain the syrup or juice before liquidising. Try serving with custard, cream, ice cream or evaporated milk. Fruits containing pips, skins or seeds may need to be sieved.</p>
<p>Ready-made meals/ desserts</p> <p>These can contain a combination of the food groups listed above.</p>	<p>Follow the cooking instructions on the tin or packet. Use the liquidiser to produce a smooth texture. You may need to use additional sauces or gravy.</p> <p>Examples of meals include shepherd's pie, beef casserole, fisherman's pie, macaroni cheese, lasagne, stew and dumplings, corned beef hash and cauliflower cheese.</p> <p>Tinned or packet desserts include custard, milk puddings, thick yogurts, crème caramel, instant whip, mousse and ice cream.</p>

Snacks

- Soaked or pureed cake, cream buns or muffins with extra seedless jam, double cream or custard (no hard lumps/chunks)
- Pureed carrot cake with cream cheese (no hard lumps/chunks)
- Pureed ginger cake and butter
- Pureed filling of a custard tart
- Topping of a smooth cheesecake

Try to ensure your meals are as nourishing as possible by enriching the protein and energy content. You can find more information about enriching foods on page 8.

Sample menu plan

Breakfast

- Wheat biscuits, instant oat cereal or porridge pureed with full cream milk, fortified milk or cream plus sugar, syrup or honey.

Mid morning

- Milky drink or supplement drink.

Midday meal

- Pureed minced meat or casserole with mashed potatoes, or macaroni cheese with mashed potatoes and butter with vegetables, or pureed ready-made meal.
- Pureed tinned or stewed fruit with custard or cream, or full fat yogurt or mousse, or milk pudding.

Mid afternoon

- Milky drink or supplement drink.

Evening meal

- See midday meal.

Supper

- Milky drink or supplement drink.

If you struggle to cook

Ready-made meals can be useful if you are struggling to cook.

You can also contact your local council or other local organisations/charities to see if they can provide meals that can be delivered to your home.

Constipation

Constipation can become a problem when you are not able to eat a normal diet. If you do become constipated take more fruit juice (avoid this if your mouth is sore), vegetable juice, soft vegetables, stewed or tinned fruit such as pureed and sieved prunes, apricots pureed and sieved and whole grain cereals such as porridge, Wheat biscuits, instant oat cereal etc.

Make sure you are also drinking 6 to 8 cups of fluid per day to help alleviate or prevent constipation.

Christie information

The Christie produces a range of patient information booklets. Some of these are listed below:

■ **Nutritional products**

Describes all the special nutritional products available to help people when eating is difficult.

■ **Eating – help yourself**

Gives general information about coping with eating difficulties when having treatment.

■ **Eating well with diabetes when you have a poor appetite**

Notes

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence.

If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **patient.information@christie.nhs.uk**

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Visit the Cancer Information Centre

The Christie at Withington **0161 446 8100**

The Christie at Oldham **0161 918 7745**

The Christie at Salford **0161 918 7804**

Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm.

Opening times can vary, please ring to check
before making a special journey.

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The Christie Patient Information Service

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