

Nutrition and dietetics

Speech and language therapy

# Easy chew food for people with kidney conditions

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet is for people with kidney conditions who need to eat easy chew foods. It explains what easy chew foods are to help you choose the right food when you are in hospital and at home. If you have any questions, please speak to your dietitian or speech and language therapist.

### What is easy chew food?

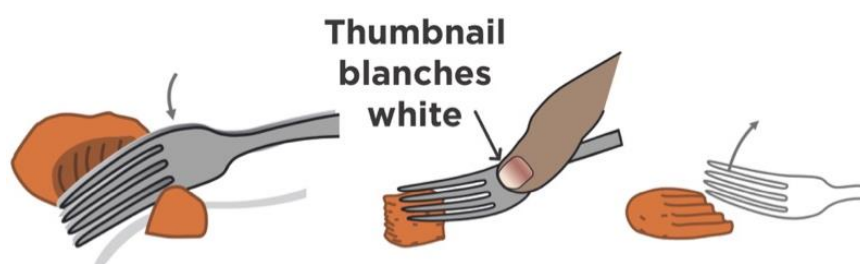
Easy chew foods are normal, everyday foods that are soft and tender and come in a range of sizes. Most everyday foods can be made easy to chew by cooking them differently, so you can still eat many of the foods you enjoy with a change to the consistency. For example, most meat, fish, fruit and vegetables can be made soft enough when cooked for longer.

### Why do I need this type of food?

You may have problems eating, chewing or swallowing hard food, have missing teeth or poorly fitting dentures, or pain in the mouth. These conditions may increase the risk of choking or food going down the wrong way and into the airway (aspiration) in some people.

Easy chew food is recommended if the muscles in your mouth are strong enough to safely bite off pieces of food and chew them into smaller pieces before swallowing, without getting easily tired. It may also be recommended if you have been ill and are regaining your strength.

The best way to test if your food is easy to chew is to use the **fork pressure test**. Food should be soft and tender enough that you can break it apart easily with the side of a fork or spoon. Press down on the food with the fork until your thumb nail turns white. Lift the fork away and check the food is squashed and does not return to its original shape.



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## Are there any foods to avoid?

The following types of food are not suitable for an easy chew diet:

- **hard, crunchy or dry food** such as nuts, raw or stir fried vegetables, pips and seeds, dry cakes, dry cereal, crusty or dry bread without fillings, toast
- **tough or fibrous food** such as steak, pineapple, the white parts of an orange
- **food with skins, husks, or outer shells** such as peas, beans, grapes, sweetcorn, tomatoes, skin on meat, sausages
- **crispy food** such as crackling, crispy bacon, dry cornflakes
- **crumbly food** including dry cake and biscuits
- **chewy food** such as sweets, marshmallows, toffees, chewing gum, dried fruits, sticky food
- **sticky or gummy food** such as gelatin, sticky rice cakes
- **sharp or spiky food** such as crisps
- **stringy food** such as green beans or rhubarb
- **juicy food** where liquid separates from the food in the mouth, such as ice cream, jelly made with gelatin, watermelon and apple

## What if I am also having thickened liquids?

If you are having thickened liquids, make sure that 'liquid food' such as soups, casseroles, curries, dhals, gravy or sauces are the same level of thickness as your drinks.

You should not have ice cream, sorbet, or jelly made with gelatin if you need thickened liquids unless your speech and language therapist has advised this is safe for you. This is because they melt quickly in the mouth and become a thin liquid, which may go down the wrong way when you swallow (aspiration). Some types of jelly are not made with gelatin, and these may be suitable for you. If you are unsure, ask your speech and language therapist for advice.

## Will I always need easy chew food?

This depends on why we have recommended this food for you. Some people experience medical conditions that cause problems with eating and drinking for a short time but get better quickly as they recover and get stronger. Sometimes it takes longer to recover the strength in your chewing muscles and you may need to have easy chew food until you are able to eat and swallow without getting tired. The speech and language therapist will work closely with you, your doctor and dietitian to decide the best way to manage your eating.

You should speak to your speech and language therapist or doctor if you notice any changes in your swallowing, or if you are having difficulty eating easy chew food. We may recommend a change to your food texture or drink thickness. Your speech and language therapist and dietitian will be able to help you choose the right food for you.

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## Helpful tips for eating enough

### **Eat little and often**

If you find it difficult to eat your usual amount of food or you get full-up quickly, try eating smaller amounts of food more frequently during the day.

This may mean eating three small meals a day and having snacks between meals and at bedtime. You may also prefer to eat part of your meal and keep your pudding for later.

### **Eat a variety of food**

Eating a variety of foods will provide you with all the nourishment you need and will keep your daily diet interesting and enjoyable. You may need to take a vitamin and mineral supplement if you are not able to include a wide variety of food in your diet. If you are concerned, ask your dietitian for advice.

### **Increase the energy and protein in your food**

Changing the texture of your food to easy to chew may mean it is more difficult to get all the energy and protein your body needs. You can increase the energy and protein in your meals by adding extra fats and full fat dairy products, for example:

- adding butter, margarine or vegetable oils to food
- adding milk or cream to cereals, drinks, soups and puddings

### **Make your meal look and taste attractive**

When presenting your food in a bowl or on a plate, try to keep different parts separate so that it looks more appetising and you can see what you are eating. Choose foods that you enjoy eating.

You can add extra flavour to meals by adding herbs and spices, lemon juice, or a small amount of grated, strong cheese. You can also try adding sauces such as mint, soya, Worcester, balsamic vinegar, or anchovy.

If food seems too dry or sticky, try adding extra liquid such as:

- milk or other dairy products such as cream or yoghurts
- gravy or other sauces
- fat such as melted butter or oil
- ice cream, custard or fromage frais

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## Ideas for mealtimes

### Breakfast ideas

- porridge made with the milk fully absorbed
- cereals softened in milk such as Weetabix<sup>®</sup>, All-Bran<sup>®</sup>, Corn Flakes<sup>™</sup> or Bran Flakes
- full fat yoghurt and fromage frais
- a small glass of apple or pineapple juice
- boiled, poached or scrambled eggs, omelettes with cheese
- pear or ripe peaches
- stewed or soft tinned fruit such as apple or strawberries
- soft bread without crusts served with butter, jam or marmalade
- French toast (bread soaked in egg and milk and fried) or brioche served with a sweet topping
- add cream, sugar, honey, yoghurt, crème fraiche or a nutritional supplement for extra calories

### Soups, casseroles, stew and curries

- creamy meat, fish or vegetable soup
- dhal, minced meat, lentils or beans
- thick stews or curries with small pieces of soft meat
- add butter, margarine, oil, cream, grated cheese or a savoury nutritional supplement for extra calories

### Fish, meat and poultry

- tender chicken or meat served with a gravy, cream, cheese or white sauce, or a savoury nutritional supplement
- soft fish e.g. kippers with sauce
- poached chicken in a cream sauce or cheese sauce, or rich gravy
- pasta dishes such as lasagne, moussaka, or cannelloni
- cottage pie, shepherd's pie, bolognese sauce, chilli con carne
- fish mixed with melted butter, white or parsley sauce, boil in the bag fish, fisherman's pie, homemade fish cakes made with tinned fish with potato mashed together
- tuna mayonnaise

### Vegetarian options

- pease pudding, mushy peas, thick dhals, lentil puree, pureed bean dips
- thick vegetable and lentil casserole
- soft cooked risotto and other rice dishes served with a thick sauce, macaroni cheese
- omelette, cheese soufflé, eggs in cheese sauce, egg mayonnaise
- soft-cooked cauliflower cheese
- quiche or flan with the crust removed
- cream cheese, curd and cottage cheese
- mashed potato or sweet potato with butter, cream, cheese or oil

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## Vegetables

- combinations of soft cooked vegetables such as carrots and swede, pumpkin with turnips, celeriac and cauliflower, ratatouille
- boiled marrow, courgette, squash, sweet potato
- add butter, margarine, oil, cream, grated cheese, full fat yoghurt or a mashed boiled egg for extra calories

## Desserts

- milk pudding, egg custard, rice pudding, panna cotta, semolina, lemon curd
- fruit compote, baked apple, stewed fruit, trifle, some soft tinned fruits in syrup
- yoghurt, fruit fool, mousse, instant whip
- crème caramel
- jam roly poly, soft sponge cake, sponge pudding
- cheesecake, fruit compote, baked apple
- add custard, ice cream, cream, thick and creamy yoghurts or fromage frais to puddings for extra calories

## Snacks

- custard, rice pudding, yoghurt, mousse, trifle
- soft sponge fingers soaked in liquid, moist sponge cake
- houmous, tahini, vegetable, meat or fish paté

## What happens if I have a low potassium diet?

If you follow a low potassium diet, boil potatoes and vegetables and throw the water away to remove some of the potassium before mashing. If you have any questions about soft and bite-sized food that is suitable for a low potassium diet, please speak to your dietitian.

If you normally take phosphate tablets with food to help you absorb and get rid of phosphate from your body, you may need to change the tablets to a powder form that you can mix with water or sprinkle over your food. If you are eating more than three times per day, you may need to increase the amount of phosphate powder you use. Speak to your dietitian if you have any questions.

## Your weight

Your weight on discharge is: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are finding it difficult to eat well following the advice in this leaflet, and/or you are still losing weight, you can get help and advice from your GP or dietitian. **Please weigh yourself once a week and contact your dietitian if your weight falls below:**

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## Where can I buy ready-made meals that are easy chew?

You can buy food which is easy to chew from the supermarket. Alternatively, some companies make ready-made meals which are easy to chew and can be delivered to your home. When ordering, make sure to ask for **Level 7- Easy chew**.

### **Wiltshire Farm Foods**

Telephone: 0800 066 3549

[www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/ready-meals/extra-tender](http://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/ready-meals/extra-tender)

### **Oakhouse foods**

Telephone: 0333 370 6700

[www.oakhousefoods.co.uk/specialist-nutrition/fork-mashable.html](http://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk/specialist-nutrition/fork-mashable.html)

### **Hermolis**

A range of kosher meals can be ordered via telephone or email.

Telephone: 0191 456 0456

E-mail: [sales@hermolis.com](mailto:sales@hermolis.com)

### **Punjab Kitchens**

A range of halal meals can be ordered online or via telephone.

Telephone: 0191 456 0456

<https://punjabkitchen.co.uk/texture-modified-meals/>

## How do I contact my dietitian and speech and language therapist?

### **Hammersmith Hospital**

Dietitian 020 3313 3048

Speech and language therapist 020 3313 3076

### **Charing Cross Hospital**

Dietitian 020 3311 1445

Speech and language therapist 020 3311 1764

### **St Mary's Hospital**

Dietitian 020 3312 6398

Speech and language therapist 020 3312 6101

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## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

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