

Nutrition and dietetics

Speech and language therapy

Pureed food

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who need to eat pureed food. It explains what pureed 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 pureed food?

Pureed food is thick and completely smooth with no lumps or variation in texture. Because the food is already smooth, there should be no need to bite or chew this food before swallowing. Pureed food is usually eaten with a spoon and is thick enough to be piped, layered or moulded into a shape. It is too thick to be drunk from a cup or sucked through a straw. Pureed food should not be firm or sticky as it may stick in the mouth or throat.

Why do I need this type of food?

You may have problems chewing or swallowing (dysphagia), such as weak or slow tongue movements, have missing teeth or poorly fitting dentures, or pain in the mouth. These conditions can increase the risk of choking or food going down the wrong way and into the airway (aspiration). Pureed food is recommended if you can move the tongue in the mouth but cannot chew food into smaller pieces that are safe to swallow.

How do I know that the pureed food is thick enough?

Pureed food is thick enough if it passes the following two tests:

1. Fork drip test

Pureed food sits in a mound or a pile above the fork. A small amount of food may sink through the slits in a fork and form a tail below, but it does not dollop or drip continuously through.

2. Spoon tilt test

Pureed food holds its shape on the spoon and a full spoonful should fall off fairly easily if the spoon is tilted or lightly flicked with very little left behind.

Source: The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative 2016
@<https://iddsi.org/framework>



How do I make pureed food?

You can puree food using a blender, a food processor or it can be mashed with a fork and then sieved. After blending, you may need to sieve food to remove any small pieces that could cause you to choke. Most everyday foods can be pureed well using the tips below, so you can still enjoy eating many of the foods you like with a change to the consistency.

Tips for making pureed food at home

- Remove the skins on meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, as well as any pips and seeds, before blending
- Cut food into small pieces first and blend small quantities at a time to avoid lumps
- Blend dry food with extra liquids such as gravy, dairy or non-dairy milk or cream. Avoid adding too much water as this reduces the nutritional goodness in the food
- If food becomes too thick after blending, add extra liquid at the end so that it passes the **fork drip test** and the **spoon tilt test**
- Pureed food must stay thick on the plate without any liquid leaking out. You may need to add a thickening agent such as flour, cornflour, arrowroot or a thickening powder to some food to help it stay together

It is important that pureed food looks, tastes and smells good so that it is appetising to eat. To do this, blend each type of food separately to keep its individual colour and flavour. Present the foods on a plate so you can see each type separately. Avoid blending a whole meal together as this makes food look unattractive and reduces the flavour in the mouth.

Pureed food can be shaped on the plate to look attractive to eat using spoons, an ice-cream scoop, the ridges of a fork, specialist food moulds or by using the nozzles on a piping bag. Using garnishes such as fruit and herbs helps make food look attractive, but you should not eat these if they need to be chewed.



Are there any foods to avoid?

The following types of food are not suitable for a pureed diet because they need to be chewed and increase the risk of choking:

- **mixed thin and thick food** such as soup with pieces of food, or cereal with milk which is not fully absorbed
- **hard, crunchy or dry food** such as nuts, raw or stir fried vegetables, pips and seeds, dry cakes, dry cereal
- **tough or fibrous food** such as steak, pineapple
- **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 peanut butter, overcooked porridge, gelatin, sticky rice cakes
- **sharp or spiky food** such as crisps
- **stringy food** such as green beans or rhubarb
- **floppy food** such as lettuce, cucumber, uncooked spinach leaves
- **food that forms a crust during cooking or heating** such as a cheese topping
- **juicy food** where liquid separates from the food in the mouth, such as ice cream, jelly made with gelatin, watermelon and apple
- **bread**

What if I am also having thickened liquids?

If you are having thickened liquids, make sure that 'liquid food' such as pureed 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 pureed food?

This depends on the cause of your swallowing problem. Some medical conditions cause problems with eating and drinking for a short time but get better quickly. Other conditions do not improve quickly and you may need to have pureed food for longer. The speech and language therapist will work closely with you, your doctor and dietitian to decide the best way to manage your swallowing.

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 pureed 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.

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 pureed 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

A simple way to add energy and protein is by using fortified milk. To make this, mix four tablespoons (two ounces) of milk powder with a little milk to form a paste. Then stir in a pint of full cream milk. Keep it in the fridge and use it in your breakfasts and to make custards and desserts. You can also use it to make hot and cold milk drinks such as Ovaltine[®], Horlicks[®], hot chocolate, milky coffee and milkshakes.

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, tomato puree, a small amount of grated, strong cheese, or meat, vegetable or yeast extracts such as Marmite[®] or Bovril[®]. You can also try adding sauces such as mint, soya, Worcester, balsamic vinegar, anchovy, or chocolate or coffee liqueurs.

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

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

Ideas for mealtimes

Breakfast ideas

- instant porridge such as Ready Brek[®] made with the milk fully absorbed
- full fat yoghurt and fromage frais
- a small glass of orange, apple or pineapple juice
- any type of pureed fruit or compote (may need to be sieved to make completely smooth)
- 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, or supplement soups such as Build Up[®] or Complian[®] (may need to be thickened to the correct liquid thickness)
- pureed dhal, stews or curries
- add butter, margarine, oil, cream, grated cheese or a savoury nutritional supplement for extra calories

Fish, meat and poultry

- pureed chicken or meat served with a gravy, tomato, cream, cheese or white sauce, or a savoury nutritional supplement
- pureed mince such as the main part of cottage pie, shepherd's pie, bolognese sauce or chilli con carne
- pureed fish with melted butter, white or parsley sauce (oily fish such as salmon and mackerel have more calories and a stronger flavour than non-oily fish)
- salmon mousse, tinned tuna blended with mayonnaise or taramasalata

Vegetarian options

- pureed mushy peas, dhal, lentils or bean dips
- pureed vegetable and lentil casserole
- risotto and other rice dishes blended with a sauce (may need to be sieved)
- egg or cheese souffle, boiled eggs blended with mayonnaise
- pureed cauliflower cheese
- silken tofu blended with courgette
- smooth cream cheese, quark or curd
- pureed potato, sweet potato or Jerusalem artichoke with butter, cream, cheese or oil

Vegetables

- pureed vegetables with different flavours and colours served separately on a plate such as carrots and broccoli, butternut squash and turnips, creamed spinach and curried cauliflower, minted pea puree and celeriac
- blend with butter, margarine, oil, cream, grated cheese, full fat yoghurt or a boiled egg for extra calories
- add garlic, herbs and spices, lemon juice, honey or syrup for variations in flavour

Desserts

- smooth milk puddings, custard, panna cotta, semolina pudding
- egg custard filling (pastry removed)
- any type of pureed fruit or compote (may need to be sieved to make completely smooth)
- yoghurt, fruit fool, mousse, instant whip, jelly made with evaporated milk
- crème caramel with excess liquid drained away
- sponge puddings blended with custard, ice cream, cream, evaporated milk, thick and creamy yoghurts or fromage frais

Snacks

- houmous, avocado pureed with sour cream or a blue cheese, fish mousse or taramasalata
- any of the dessert options above

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:**

Where can I buy ready-made meals that are pureed?

You can buy some pureed food from the supermarket. Alternatively, some companies make ready-made meals which are pureed and can be delivered to your home. When ordering, make sure to ask for **Level 4 – Pureed**

Wiltshire Farm Foods

Telephone: 0800 066 3549

www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/ready-meals/extra-tender

Oakhouse foods

Telephone: 0333 370 6700

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

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

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 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

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

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