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# ***About your Level 6 SOFT & BITE-SIZED diet***

***Information for  
patients and carers***



**Speech & Language Therapy and  
Dietetic Services**





## ***What is this leaflet for?***

Difficulties with eating, drinking and swallowing are called **dysphagia** (pronounced “diss-fay-gee-ah”).

A Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) has assessed your eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. Your SLT has recommended that you follow an IDDSI\* Level 6 diet with foods that are **soft and bite-sized**.

It's very important to follow the diet texture your SLT recommends. This will help to reduce the risks associated with difficulties with swallowing. These risks include:

- aspiration (food or drink going down “the wrong way”).
- choking.
- developing chest infections.

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



We've described in this leaflet how you can change the texture of everyday meals and foods for a Level 6 diet. The tables divide food into groups to help you plan a balanced diet.

Please note that this is **general guidance only**.

You might not be able to have some of the foods mentioned because they're not safe for you. Please check the individual guidance your SLT gave you.

If you're taking thickened fluids, you must thicken all liquids (such as soups, smoothies, sauces) to the recommended consistency.



### ***What is a Level 6 soft and bite-sized diet?***

The main features of a Level 6 diet:

- Is soft, tender and moist.
- Bite-sized pieces must be 1.5cm or smaller.
- Some chewing is required before swallowing.
- Can be eaten with a fork or spoon.
- Can be mashed/broken down with pressure from a fork or spoon.
- A knife is not required to cut this texture.
- No separate thin liquid around pieces of food.

## ***How do I check if my food is the right consistency?***

- Pressure from a fork or spoon held on its side can be used to 'cut' this texture into smaller pieces.



- It mashes down with a spoon or fork.
- Can be squashed with finger, spoon or fork (pressure will be sufficient to make the fingernail blanch to white) and will not return to initial shape once pressure removed.
- Pieces will be smaller than the average thumbnail (1.5cm).

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



### ***How do I prepare food?***

- Make sure all foods are well cooked, soft tender and moist.
- Food must be soft enough to cut into bite sized pieces, **no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm** for adults and **0.8cm x 0.8cm** for babies and children.



## **Soaking solution (for Nutilis Clear® only)\***



Foods like bread, biscuits and cakes are a problem for people with swallowing difficulties. Using a soaking solution can help you achieve a smooth texture with these foods:



- Use 200ml of liquid (such as milk, fruit juice, stock) and add 1 scoop of Nutilis Clear® and whisk thoroughly.
- Use immediately and don't allow soaking solution to thicken before adding food.
- Dip food in soaking solution for 1 minute and place on plate.
- Cover and refrigerate for 1½ to 2 hours before serving.



**Always check the food is the right consistency before serving!**



- \* **If using a different thickener, please check the manufacturer's instructions.**







<b>Food group: Bread, potatoes, cereals and alternatives</b>	<b>Suitable foods (must be modified so lumps are no bigger than 1.5cm for adults and 0.8cm for children with no excess fluid)</b>  	<b>Difficult and dangerous (do not eat as they are difficult to adapt to the right consistency)</b>  
Bread	No regular dry bread due to high choking risk unless assessed as safe by Speech & Language Therapist.	Avoid all dry breads, crackers, oatcakes. Hard crispy rolls. Toast. Breads, crackers or oatcakes with seeds or grains.
Breakfast Cereals	Any cereal that fully softens when soaked in milk, served thick with small, soft lumps no bigger than above size. Pour off any excess milk before serving. Instant oat cereal, porridge (smooth). Wheat bisks or All Bran.	Avoid all dry/crispy cereals. Muesli of any variety. Any cereal or porridge with 'bits' (such as nuts, dried fruit, choc chips).



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Potatoes	Boiled, mashed, steamed, baked with skin removed.  Chunky style chips with crispy edges removed and softened with sauce or gravy, chopped into small bite sized pieces.	Whole potatoes, potato skins, crispy potatoes (such as fries, roast potatoes, rostis, croquettes).
Pasta	Fresh or tinned pasta cooked until soft and chopped into small bite sized pieces, with a sauce.  Soft noodles, chopped into small bite-sized pieces, with a thick smooth sauce.	Any whole pasta or noodle products.  Avoid dishes that form a hard/crispy topping after cooking (such as cheese or breadcrumbs).



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Rice	<p>Rice needs a smooth sauce to moisten it and hold it together. It shouldn't be sticky or gluey and shouldn't separate into individual grains.</p> <p>Tapioca, semolina, soft moist rice pudding, plain Muller Rice/Ambrosia.</p>	<p>Avoid dry, sticky or glutinous rice. Fried mixed rice, rice pudding with dried crispy edges after oven baking.</p> <p>Basmati, long grain rice, rice cakes.</p>

<b>Food group: Meat, fish and alternatives</b>	<b>Suitable foods (must be modified so lumps are no bigger than 1.5cm for adults and 0.8cm for children with no excess fluid)</b>  	<b>Difficult and dangerous (do not eat as they are difficult to adapt to the right consistency)</b>  
Meat	<p>All meat should be cooked until soft and tender and chopped or minced appropriately.</p> <p>Pate, potted meat, haggis mashed in gravy, corned beef, hot dog (the type that's bought in brine), skinless sausages.</p> <p><b>If meat can't be made tender, then consider an alternative or serve minced and moist.</b></p>	<p>Hard, tough, fatty or gristly meat.</p> <p>Any meat with skins.</p> <p>Fried, breaded or battered meat.</p> <p>Pies, pasties, sausage rolls.</p>

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Fish	<p>Skinless, boneless fish cooked until soft and flaked in a thick sauce (such as haddock mornay).</p> <p>Tinned fish flaked with mayonnaise or sauce.</p> <p>Fish pate.</p>	<p>Ensure all fish bones removed.</p> <p>No crispy coatings (such as fried, breaded or battered fish).</p> <p>Peppered mackerel due to small particles of pepper.</p>



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Eggs	Chopped hard boiled, scrambled, moist omelette, poached, smooth soufflé.	Scotch egg. Fried egg. Frittata.
Soya, Tofu or Quorn®	Make sure pieces are soft and tender.  <b>If the texture can't be made tender, then consider an alternative or serve minced and moist.</b>	Large pieces. Fried or crispy coatings.
Pulses and Nuts	Skinless pulses and beans, well cooked and of appropriate size. Hummus.	Whole pulses or beans. Nuts (whole or chopped). Nut butters.



<b>Food group: Fruits and vegetables</b>	<b>Suitable foods (must be modified so lumps are no bigger than 1.5cm for adults and 0.8cm for children with no excess fluid)</b>  	<b>Difficult and dangerous (do not eat as they are difficult to adapt to the right consistency)</b>  
Vegetables	Use well cooked vegetables cut into appropriately sized pieces.  Ripe avocado, cut appropriately.	Firm, under cooked or raw vegetables. Salad.  Stringy vegetables or vegetables with outer skins or shells (such as celery or peas).  Mixed consistency soups with husks, lentils or barley.
Fruit	Soft, fresh, frozen or tinned fruit cut into appropriately sized pieces.  Make sure skins and stones are removed.  Stewed fruit.	Hard fresh fruit such as apples.  Fibrous fruit (for example citrus fruits, pineapple, rhubarb).  Dried fruit.  Avoid fruit with skins.

<b>Food group: Dairy</b>	<b>Suitable foods (must be modified so lumps are no bigger than 1.5cm for adults and 0.8cm for children with no excess fluid)</b>  	<b>Difficult and dangerous (do not eat as they are difficult to adapt to the right consistency)</b>  
Yogurt and Fromage Frais	Yogurt with small soft pieces of fruit.  Stir in any separated liquid.	Yogurts with chunky fruit, hard pieces, crumble, nuts, cereal or other toppings and additions
Cheese	Cottage cheese.  Soft/cream cheese.  Grated cheese can be melted into other foods (such as sauces).	Hard, solid cheese.  Cheese with rind.  Cooked/chewy cheese.  Cheese with fruit added.



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<p><b>Food group: Desserts, sweets, and snacks</b></p>	<p><b>Suitable foods (must be modified so lumps are no bigger than 1.5cm for adults and 0.8cm for children with no excess fluid)</b></p> <p></p>	<p><b>Difficult and dangerous (do not eat as they are difficult to adapt to the right consistency)</b></p> <p></p>
<p>Desserts, Baking</p>	<p>Plain soft sponges, cut to appropriate size – add custard, milk or cream.</p> <p>Mousse or whipped puddings.</p> <p>Milk puddings – all types suitable (no skins).</p> <p>Plain biscuits softened in soaking solution or “dunked”.</p>	<p>Fruit cake, crumbles, tarts, flans.</p> <p>Scones, pancakes, meringue, cheesecake.</p> <p>Pastry.</p> <p>Dry sponge, cakes with royal icing.</p> <p>All other biscuits.</p>

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Chocolate and Sweets	Chocolate flavoured dessert such as mousse or whipped pudding.  Chocolates with soft fillings if appropriately modified.	Bars or pieces of solid chocolate.  All sweets (mints, boiled sweets, gummy sweets, toffees, fudge, marshmallows, chewing gum).
Savoury Snacks	Refer to savoury options within other food groups.	All dry, crunchy, crumbly snacks (such as crisps, nuts, crackers, Twiglets®, popcorn etc).
Ice Cream, Ice lollies, Jelly	<b>Check with your Speech and Language Therapist</b>	

## ***Contact telephone numbers***

If you have any questions about your recommended texture, please contact your Speech and Language Therapist on the number below:

**Name:** .....

: .....

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Ask for leaflet 1851.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.  
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please call 01224 554149 to let us know.