

Easy to Chew Foods for People with Dysphagia

Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn about:

- Dysphagia (swallowing difficulties)
- How to prepare easy to chew foods
- How to prepare and buy thickened liquids
- What foods to choose and avoid
- A sample daily menu

Name:	
Date:	
Clinician:	
Contact:	



Dysphagia

Dysphagia is the medical word for problems with chewing and swallowing.

Signs of dysphagia are:

- coughing or choking when eating or drinking
- feeling like food is stuck in your throat
- holding food in your mouth before swallowing and without swallowing
- a gurgly voice after eating
- excessive throat clearing while eating or drinking

Dysphagia can be serious. If you cannot swallow properly:

- Food and drink may go into your lungs. This can cause problems with breathing or infection.
- You may not be able to eat enough of the right foods to stay healthy and maintain your weight.

Your health conditions and swallowing needs may change. Your enjoyment of eating and drinking may also change.

We understand that food not only improves your nutrition and health but is also an important part of your sense of self, community, and well-being.

This booklet helps you eat as safely as possible. You may have other concerns. Your health care team will work with you and help you with your unique dysphagia-related needs.

How to manage dysphagia

Your health care team recommends that you follow a **easy to chew diet** for dysphagia. This booklet tells you how to do this. You will learn how to buy and prepare easy to chew foods to make swallowing easier and safer.

These tips can also help you to manage dysphagia:

- Have your meal in a quiet place.
- Take your time when eating and drinking.
- Reduce distractions. For example, turn off the TV when eating and drinking.
- Sit upright during meal times. Remain upright for at least 30 minutes after.
- Do not talk while chewing or swallowing.
- Swallow one mouthful before taking the next.

Please talk to your health care team about options for swallowing pills.

Easy to chew foods

Easy to chew foods are foods that are soft and tender either naturally or when cooked. They are not hard, tough, chewy, fibrous or stringy. They also do not have peels, seeds, bones or gristle.

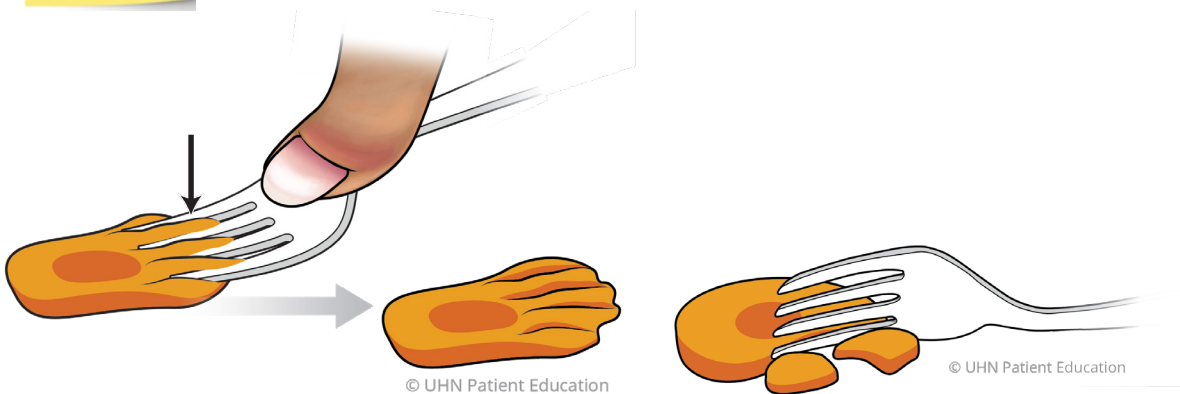
How to check that food is easy to chew

Food that is easy to chew:

- can be easily mashed with a fork with a little pressure
- can be cut apart with the side of a fork or spoon

Helpful Tips!

Use a fork to check if the food is soft and breaks apart easily



Preparing easy to chew foods

Eating out

Try calling ahead if you plan to eat out. The restaurant may be able to accommodate your needs and choose the right texture of food for you. Try checking restaurant menus online before going out to eat. You can also prepare for social gatherings by eating beforehand or bringing homemade foods that you know are safe for you to eat.

Preparing easy to chew foods at home

It can be hard for restaurants to make foods that are safe for people with chewing and swallowing difficulties. You may need to rely mostly on homemade foods.

Besides choosing naturally soft foods like ripe bananas, you can prepare foods to become easy to chew at home in several ways.

1. Cook foods until tender

- You can chop, mince or mash foods to make them easier to chew.
- Prepare meats and fish in ways that cook slowly and add moisture. Examples are slow cooking, simmering and poaching.
- You can also make meats more tender using a meat tenderizer (pounder) or a marinade made of acidic ingredients like citrus juices, vinegars and wines.
- Steam or boil vegetables from the list on page 7. Stir-fried vegetables may be too firm and hard to chew unless steamed or boiled first.

2. Soften with liquids

- Dry foods need to be softened with a liquid first.
- Prepare cereal by softening it in milk first.
- Add more moisture with the foods in the table below. For example, sauces can add moisture to dried out leftovers.



Do not buy foods that have added nuts, seeds, fruit or other chunks.

How to add moisture to make easy to chew foods

Add moisture to foods by adding:

- gravy
- sauce like tomato sauce or a cream sauce
- butter or margarine
- sour cream
- yogurt
- mayonnaise





**Helpful
Tips!**

Keep low sodium instant gravy mix in your pantry for an easy way to add moisture to foods.

Foods to choose and avoid

People with swallowing difficulties find different foods appetizing and comfortable to eat. Your meals may look different than they did before. We encourage you to find foods and ways to eat them that satisfy your nutritional needs, are enjoyable, and are safe for you to swallow.

	✓ Foods to choose	✗ Foods to avoid
Vegetables and Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft-cooked, canned, fresh, or cooked frozen vegetables (such as squash, green beans, broccoli, or ripe avocado) • Canned soft fruits, rinsed and drained (such as peaches, or cherries) • Soft ripe fruits (such as bananas or pears) • Mashed potatoes • Applesauce or other fruit sauces • Fruit or vegetable juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough, raw, or stringy vegetables (such as celery) • Tough, stringy or pulpy fruits (such as pineapple or orange) • Fruit with skin, seeds or pits • French fries • Coconut • Dried fruit
Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, oat bran, infant cereal, cream of rice) • Cold cereals softened in milk (such as bran flakes or rice crisps) • Soft-cooked grains (such as barley) • Well-cooked pasta or noodles • Congee or rice • Soft cereal bars • Soft pancakes or muffins • Soft bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry cereal • Grain products with seeds, nuts or fruit • Crackers, Melba toast, rice cakes • Waffles, French toast • Pita bread, tortillas, roti, chapatti

	 Foods to choose	 Foods to avoid
Milk and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth yogurt without fruits, seeds or nuts • Cottage cheese • Smooth pudding and custard • Milk or soy beverage • Rice pudding, tapioca pudding • Ice cream or sherbet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogurt with dried fruit, granola, seeds or nuts • Hard cheeses, soft cheeses, cheese spread and cream cheese
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft and tender meat and poultry without bones, served with sauce to moisten • Minced or mashed cooked meat and poultry without bones, served with sauce to moisten • Soft hamburgers or veggie burgers • Soft and tender fish without bones, served with sauce to moisten • Canned fish with bones removed and added mayonnaise • Soft-cooked or canned beans, lentils, chickpeas and other legumes, drained • Soft tofu or soy protein • Cooked eggs (diced, whole, scrambled) and substitutes • Smooth hummus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeds • Nuts and nut butter • Tough or stringy cuts of meat • Cuts of meats with bones or gristle • Sausages, hot dogs, wieners • Bacon, bacon bits, or beef jerky • Crispy or fried meat, poultry, fish, or alternatives

	✓ Foods to choose	✗ Foods to avoid
Mixed Dishes and Entrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casseroles and entrees made with ingredients in this 'Foods to choose' column (such as lasagna, scalloped potatoes, shepherd's pie) • Soups made with ingredients in this 'Foods to choose' column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dishes or soups with ingredients from this 'Foods to avoid' column
Sweets and Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, pureed desserts without nuts or seeds • Honey, syrups, sugars, seedless jams and jellies • Soft cookies • Soft baked desserts (such as moist cakes) • Ice cream, sherbet, frozen yogurt, Popsicles • Gelatin desserts (such as Jell-o) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard or soft candies • Carbonated beverages • Hard or crumbly desserts • Dessert with coconut pieces, dried or candied fruit
Condiments, Fats and Oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter, margarine, oil • Pureed or smooth gravies and other sauces • Ketchup, smooth mustard, mayonnaise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbs, spices and seasonings with hard seeds • Salad dressings with grainy spices (such as coarse ground pepper, grainy mustard)

Sample daily menu

Here is an example of eating well on an easy to chew diet (meal plan).

Breakfast

- Cream of Wheat
- Tender, mashed beans or tofu
- Scrambled egg with butter
- Plain biscuit softened with milk
- Tea

Lunch

- Cream of mushroom soup
- Meat, poultry or fish casserole
- Mashed potatoes with gravy
- Green beans, cooked until soft
- Moist cake
- Milk

Afternoon Snack

- Soft fresh fruit, skins and seeds removed
- Vanilla yogurt
- Water

Dinner

- Minestrone soup made with ingredients from the “foods to choose” column
- Pasta with tomato sauce, chicken and mashed broccoli
- Banana
- Milk

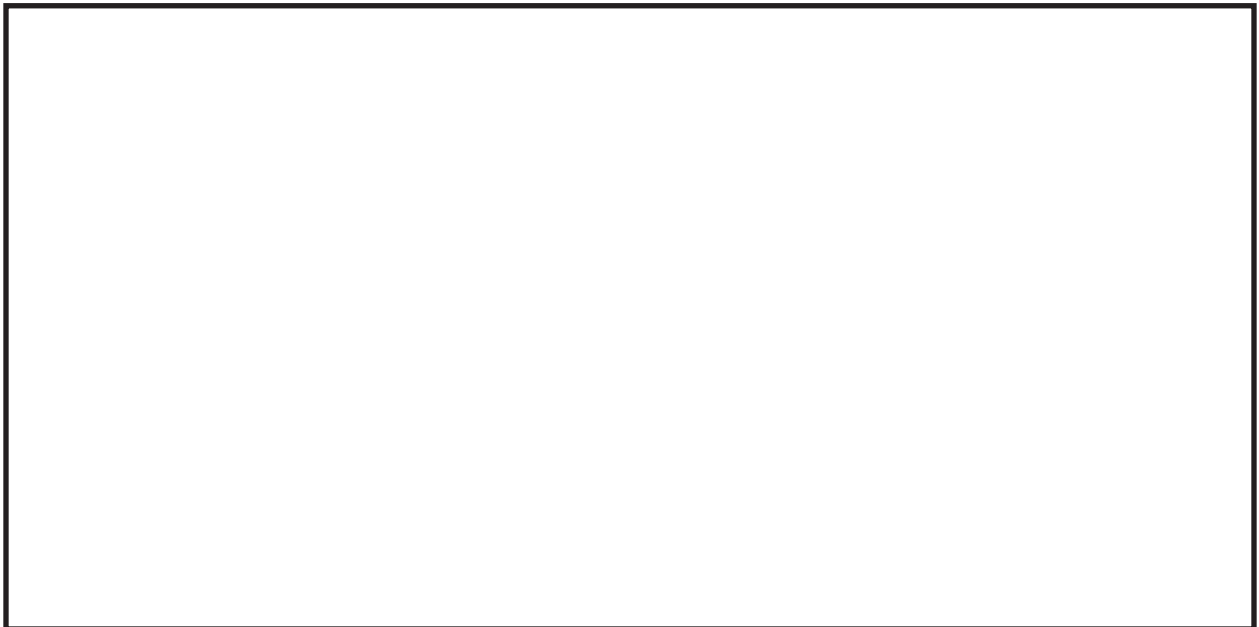
Evening Snack

- Smooth cottage cheese
- Canned fruit

Your health care team can use the box below to write down guidelines and suggestions specific to your chewing and swallowing needs.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing down guidelines and suggestions specific to chewing and swallowing needs.

Use the box below to write down any questions or concerns you may have. You can discuss them with your health care team at the next follow up visit.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing down any questions or concerns that may be discussed with a health care team at the next follow-up visit.

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