

Pureed Foods and Thickened Liquids for People with Dysphagia

Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn about:

- dysphagia
- how to prepare and buy pureed 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 difficulty 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 without swallowing
- a wet or gurgly voice after eating

Dysphagia can be serious. If you cannot swallow properly:

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

How to manage dysphagia

Your health care team recommends that you follow a **puree and thickened liquid diet** for dysphagia. This booklet tells you how to do this. You will learn how to buy and prepare pureed foods and thickened liquids 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 such as turning 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.

Pureed foods

Pureed foods do not need chewing. They are completely smooth with no lumps, skins, strings or seeds.

How to check that food is pureed



Food that is pureed:

- Is usually eaten with a spoon
- Holds its shape on a spoon
- Flows very slowly
- Is not sticky
- Falls off spoon when tilted in a single spoonful
- Does not separate into liquid and solid
- Cannot be sucked through a straw

Preparing pureed foods at home

You can puree most foods using a blender or food processor.

1. Prepare soft and well-cooked foods from the lists on pages 8 and 9.
2. Place food in a blender or food processor.
3. Depending on the type of food, add liquid to the blender or food processor.
4. Blend until smooth.
5. Use the checklist on page 4 to make sure the food is pureed.
 - If food is too runny, you may need to add a thickening powder or gel (see page 6).
 - If any lumps or skins remain, strain the food with a fine mesh strainer.

<p>Adding liquid:</p>	
<p>To make pureed foods more smooth, you can add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water • juice • broth • milk • gravies • yogurt • sauces • supplement drinks 	
<p style="text-align: center;">  Do not add too much liquid or the food may be too runny. </p>	
<p>Pureeing meats:</p>	
<p>Food that is pureed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use meats that have been cooked with moisture (boiled, poached, steamed, or braised). • Add 4 tablespoons (60 ml) of liquid for every 2 ounces (60 grams) of meat and puree. Add more liquid if needed. 	
<p>Pureeing meals:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can buy or prepare meals made with soft and well-cooked foods that can be pureed at home • These foods include entrees such as pasta dishes, cooked meats, and canned foods (soup, chili, and stews). 	

Some very soft foods like ripe bananas, well cooked potatoes and avocado can be mashed with a fork or masher until smooth. A small amount of liquid may be added to make the food smooth and moist.

Buying pureed foods

Some foods naturally have a pureed texture. You can buy them at the grocery store and they are ready to eat.

These foods include:

- yogurt
- smooth puddings
- smooth hummus
- applesauce and other fruit sauces
- instant cereals like oat bran and cream of wheat
- baby food

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

You may also buy pureed foods online or over the phone and have them delivered to your home. Ask your Registered Dietitian or Speech Language Pathologist for a list of companies that offer this service.

Thickened liquids

Your health care team will check one box to show you how thick your liquids should be.

 Nectar / Mildly thick **Honey / Moderately thick** **Pudding / Extremely thick**

Thickening liquids at home

You can thicken liquids at home with thickening powders or gels.

Some examples are:

- Nestle Resource® ThickenUp® Clear
- Hormel Thick & Easy®
- Kingsmill® Quick Thick
- Simply Thick® Instant Food Thickener

Each product is different. Follow the instructions on the package.

You will need to thicken all the liquids you drink. These include:

- water
- milk
- tea
- coffee
- nutrition supplements
- juice
- soup



Important: Make sure that thickened liquids remain thick at room temperature. Ice cream, ice cubes, sherbet, Jell-o and Popsicles melt at room temperature. These foods are not safe to eat or drink.



- You may need to use a blender to remove lumps of thickener.
- Some thickeners can take up to 20 minutes to become thick.



Check the thickness of the liquid before drinking.

Stir the liquid with a spoon. Tilt the spoon and watch the liquid flow off the spoon. Make sure it is thick enough before swallowing. Your clinician may give you more specific guidelines to test the thickness of the liquid.

Buying thickened liquids

You can buy liquids that are already thickened, such as:

- Thick and Easy® Clear Thickened Water
- Thick and Easy® Thickened Fruit Juices
- Thick and Easy® Thickened Water
- Thick-it® Thickened Fruit Juices
- Thick-it® Thickened Coffee and Tea
- Thick-it® Thickened water

Thickened liquids are sold at stores, online and over the phone. Ask your health care provider for a list of where to buy these products. Make sure you purchase thickened liquids that are the same thickness as your health care team recommendation.

Important: The following is not a full list of brands or products. The University Health Network does not recommend one brand over another and is not responsible for any products listed. Please contact each company directly to find out more about their products.

Foods to choose and avoid

	✓ Foods to choose	✗ Foods to avoid
Vegetables and Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pureed cooked or canned vegetables • Pureed, canned or soft fruits (such as applesauce) • Pureed or smooth mashed potatoes • Mashed soft fruits and vegetables (such as banana, avocado) • Thickened fruit or vegetable juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough, raw, or stringy vegetables (such as celery) • Tough, stringy, pulpy or watery fruits (such as orange, pineapple, watermelon)
Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked cereals (such as cream of wheat, oat bran, infant cereal, cream of rice) • Pureed barley, bulgur • Pureed congee or rice • Pureed pasta or noodles • Pureed bread, pancakes or muffins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry cereal • Grain products with seeds, nuts or fruit • Crackers, melba toast, rice cakes • Waffles, French toast
Milk and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth yogurt without fruits, seeds or nuts • Cheese as an ingredient in pureed foods • Pureed cottage cheese • Smooth pudding and custard • Thickened milk or soy beverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogurt with fruit, seeds or nuts • Hard cheeses, soft cheeses, cheese spread and cream cheese (not as an ingredient in pureed foods) • Ice cream • Rice pudding, tapioca pudding

	✓ Foods to choose	✗ Foods to avoid
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pureed meat, poultry and fish without bones • Pureed beans, lentils, chickpeas and other legumes • Mashed soft or silken tofu • Pureed scrambled egg • 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
Mixed Dishes and Entrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pureed casseroles and entrees made with ingredients in this 'Foods to choose' column (such as macaroni and cheese, lasagna) • Smooth, pureed soups with thickener if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dishes or soups with ingredients from this • 'Foods to avoid' column, as they do not puree well • Thin soups
Sweets and Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, pureed desserts without nuts or seeds (puddings, custard etc.) • Honey, syrups, sugars, • seedless jams and jellies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice cream, sherbet, frozen yogurt, Popsicles • Gelatin desserts (such as Jell-o) • Hard or soft candies • Carbonated beverages
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"> • Salad dressings with grainy spices (such as coarse ground pepper, grainy mustard)

Sample daily menu

Here is an example of eating well on a puree and thickened liquid diet.

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Muffin pureed with milk• Cream of Wheat• Pureed scrambled egg• Thickened milk• Thickened apple juice
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pureed turkey• Mashed potatoes with gravy• Pureed green beans• Chocolate pudding• Thickened milk• Strained and thickened cream of mushroom soup
Afternoon Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applesauce• Vanilla yogurt• Thickened water
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pureed pasta with tomato sauce, chicken, and broccoli• Mashed banana• Pureed and thickened minestrone soup• Thickened milk
Evening Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pureed cottage cheese• Pureed canned fruit

Have feedback about this document? Please fill out our survey. Use this link: bit.ly/uhn-pe

Paper and printing generously donated by Art Printing Company



Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information. Contact pfep@uhn.ca to request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats.

© 2020 University Health Network. All rights reserved. Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. You may print 1 copy of this brochure for non-commercial and personal use only.