

# Pureed foods and thickened liquids for people with dysphagia



UHN

## 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

<b>Name:</b>	
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# Dysphagia

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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 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 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

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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:

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

## Preparing pureed foods at home

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.

### Adding liquid

To make pureed foods more smooth, you can add:

- water
- juice
- broth
- milk
- gravies
- yogurt
- sauces
- supplement drinks



**Do not add too much liquid  
or the food may be too runny.**

You can puree most other 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 3 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.



**Helpful  
Tips!**

**Pureeing meats:**

Food that is pureed:

- Use meats that have been cooked with moisture (boiled, poached, steamed, or braised).
- Add 4 tablespoons (60 ml) of liquid for every 2 oz. (60 grams) of meat and puree. Add more liquid if needed.

**Pureeing meals:**

- 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).

## 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
- Apple sauce 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 Dietitian, Diet Technician or Speech Language Pathologist for a list of companies that offer this service.

## Thickened liquids

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Nectar-thick <b>Mildly thick</b>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Honey-thick <b>Moderately thick</b>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Pudding-thick <b>Extremely thick</b>
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## Thickening liquids at home

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

Some examples are:

- Nestle Resource® ThickenUp® Clear
- Nestle Resource® ThickenUp®
- 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
- nutrition supplements
- milk
- juice
- tea
- soup
- coffee



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



**Helpful  
Tips!**

- 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.

## **Buying thickened liquids**

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



- Resource<sup>®</sup> Dairy Thick
- Resource<sup>®</sup> ThickenUp<sup>®</sup> Thickened Juice Beverages
- Thick and Easy<sup>®</sup> Clear Thickened Water
- Thick and Easy<sup>®</sup> Thickened Fruit Juices
- Thick and Easy<sup>®</sup> Thickened Water
- Thick-it<sup>®</sup> Thickened Fruit Juices
- Thick-it<sup>®</sup> Thickened Coffee

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 healthcare team recommendation.

## Foods to choose and avoid

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



	 <b>Foods to choose</b>	 <b>Foods to avoid</b>
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pureed meat, poultry and fish without bones</li> <li>• Pureed beans, lentils, chickpeas and other legumes</li> <li>• Mashed soft or silken tofu</li> <li>• Pureed scrambled egg</li> <li>• Smooth hummus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeds</li> <li>• Nuts and Nut butter</li> <li>• Tough or stringy cuts of meat</li> <li>• Cuts of meats with bones or gristle</li> </ul>
<b>Mixed Dishes and Entrees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pureed casseroles and entrees made with ingredients in this ‘Foods to choose’ column (such as macaroni and cheese, lasagna)</li> <li>• Smooth, pureed soups with thickener if needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dishes or soups with ingredients from this ‘Foods to avoid’ column, as they do not puree well</li> <li>• Thin soups</li> </ul>
<b>Sweets and Desserts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smooth, pureed desserts without nuts or seeds</li> <li>• Honey, syrups, sugars, seedless jams and jellies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice cream, sherbet, frozen yogurt, popsicles</li> <li>• Gelatin desserts (such as Jello)</li> <li>• Hard or soft candies</li> <li>• Carbonated beverages</li> </ul>
<b>Condiments, Fats and Oils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butter, margarine, oil</li> <li>• Pureed or smooth gravies and other sauces</li> <li>• Ketchup, smooth mustard, mayonnaise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salad dressings with grainy spices (such as coarse ground pepper, grainy mustard)</li> </ul>

## Sample daily menu

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

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