

# Soft and Bite-Sized Foods for People with Dysphagia

## Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn about:

- Dysphagia (swallowing difficulties)
- How to prepare soft and bite-sized foods
- What foods to choose and avoid
- A sample daily menu

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
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## 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 **soft and bite-sized diet** for dysphagia. This booklet tells you how to do this. You will learn how to buy and prepare soft and bite-sized 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 mealtimes. 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.

## Soft and bite-sized foods

Soft and bite-sized foods are soft, tender and moist. No liquid leaks or drips from the food.

### How to check that food is soft and bite-sized

Food that is soft and bite-sized:

- can be mashed or broken down with pressure from a fork
- can be cut without a knife
- should not have liquid leaking or dripping from it
- can be eaten using a fork, spoon or chopsticks
- is no bigger than 1.5 centimetres by 1.5 centimetres (cm) in size



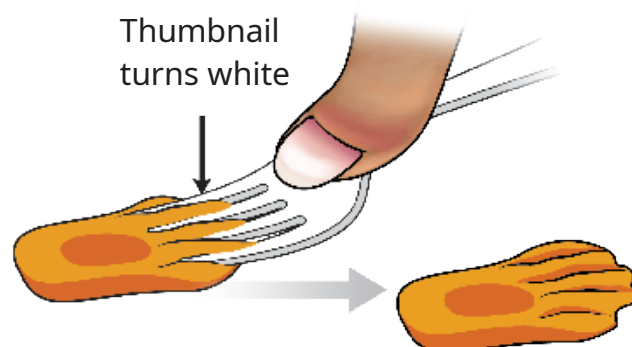
An example of 1.5 cm X 1.5 cm

### Helpful Tips!

Press food with fork prongs to check if food pieces are soft enough

Press into the food with a fork until your thumbnail turns white.

After lifting the fork, check that the food is completely squashed and does not go back to its original shape. If yes, it is soft enough.



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## **Preparing soft and bite-sized 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 soft and bite-sized 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.

You can prepare soft and bite-sized foods by cooking foods tender and using a knife to cut the food into bite sizes.

#### **1. Cook foods until tender**

- Prepare soft and well-cooked foods from the list on page 8.
- Use pressure with a fork to check if meats are tender enough.
- Tender meats should be easily cut through with little difficulty when using a fork and knife.
- You can make foods more tender by adding sauces during or after cooking. When needed, add moisture with the foods in the table below.

## How to add moisture to foods

Add moisture to foods by adding:

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



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

## 2. Use a knife to cut the food into bite sizes

- Cut food into small pieces with a knife so that they are no bigger than 1.5 centimetres by 1.5 centimetres. This is roughly the size of your thumbnail.

## **Minced foods**

Minced foods are also safe for people who need soft and bite-sized foods. Minced foods only need a little bit of chewing. They are soft, moist and can be broken down with the tongue.

These foods include:



- minced or mashed cooked vegetables (such as squash, green beans or broccoli)
- cooked cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat or oat bran)
- minced and moistened soft fish without bones
- cottage cheese
- minced or mashed canned fruits, drained (such as peaches)

You can mince most foods in several ways:



- Mash soft or well-cooked foods.
- Use a knife to cut food across into small pieces so that they are no wider than 4 millimetres in width.
- Place food in a food processor and blend until smooth.



## 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.

	 <b>Foods to choose</b>	 <b>Foods to avoid</b>
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft and bite-sized, mashed, steamed, or boiled vegetables (such as squash, carrot, broccoli, or cauliflower)</li> <li>• Soft and bite-sized canned vegetables, drained (such as tomatoes, spinach, or green beans)</li> <li>• Soft and bite-sized canned fruits, rinsed and drained (such as peaches or cherries)</li> <li>• Soft and bite-sized fresh fruits (such as banana, cantaloupe, mango or avocado)</li> <li>• Boiled potatoes, cut into bite-sized pieces</li> <li>• Mashed potatoes</li> <li>• Applesauce or other fruit sauces</li> <li>• Fruit or vegetable juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw vegetables (such as carrots, cucumber, celery)</li> <li>• Tough, stringy, or pulpy fruits (such as pineapple or orange)</li> <li>• Juicy fruits with a lot of liquid (such as watermelon or grapes)</li> <li>• Hard fruits (such as apples or pear)</li> <li>• Coconut</li> <li>• Dried fruit</li> <li>• Floppy vegetables (such as lettuce, cucumber, uncooked spinach leaves)</li> <li>• Fruits with outer layers (such as grapes)</li> </ul>



	 <b>Foods to choose</b>	 <b>Foods to avoid</b>
<b>Grain Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooked cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, oat bran, infant cereal, cream of rice)</li> <li>• Dry cereals, softened with liquid, then drained</li> <li>• Bite-sized, tender pasta or noodles (such as macaroni, orzo, baby shells, star pasta)</li> <li>• Thick congee</li> <li>• Rice served with non-sticky sauces that moisten and hold grains together</li> <li>• Moistened bread, pancakes, muffins cut into bite sized pieces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bread</li> <li>• Dry cereal</li> <li>• Grain products with seeds, nuts or fruit</li> <li>• Crackers, Melba toast, rice cakes</li> <li>• Tortilla chips</li> <li>• Shredded wheat</li> <li>• Crisps</li> </ul>
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smooth yogurt without fruits, seeds or nuts</li> <li>• Soft cheeses (such as feta or brie), cut into bite sized pieces</li> <li>• Cottage cheese</li> <li>• Cream cheese</li> <li>• Smooth pudding and custard</li> <li>• Milk or soy beverage</li> <li>• Rice pudding, tapioca pudding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yogurt with fruit, seeds or nuts</li> <li>• Hard cheeses</li> </ul>

	 <b>Foods to choose</b>	 <b>Foods to avoid</b>
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft and bite-sized meat and poultry without bones, cooked tender</li> <li>• Soft and bite-sized fish without bones, cooked tender</li> <li>• Soft and bite-sized canned fish</li> <li>• Beans, lentils, chickpeas and other legumes, cooked tender</li> <li>• Bite-sized soft tofu</li> <li>• Eggs cooked until there is no more runny yolk, scrambled or cut into bite-sized pieces</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> <li>• Sausages, hot dogs, wieners</li> <li>• Steak</li> <li>• Crisp bacon</li> <li>• Chicken, salmon, and sausage skins</li> </ul>
<b>Mixed Dishes and Entrees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft casseroles and entrees made with ingredients in this 'Foods to choose' column (such as lasagna, scalloped potatoes, shepherd's pie), cut into bite sized pieces</li> <li>• Soups made with ingredients in this 'Foods to choose' column</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soups with solid pieces of food</li> <li>• Dry cereals served with milk</li> </ul>

	✓ <b>Foods to choose</b>	✗ <b>Foods to avoid</b>
<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> <li>• Moist cake cut into bite sized pieces</li> <li>• Ice cream, sherbet, frozen yogurt, Popsicles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard or soft candies</li> <li>• Carbonated beverages</li> <li>• Hard, dry or crumbly cakes or cookies</li> <li>• Chewing gum</li> <li>• Marshmallows</li> </ul>
<b>Condiments, Fats and Oils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butter, margarine, oil</li> <li>• Smooth gravies and other sauces</li> <li>• Ketchup, smooth mustard, mayonnaise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grainy salad dressings with spices such as coarse ground pepper</li> <li>• Grainy mustard</li> </ul>

## Sample daily menu

Here is an example of eating well on a soft and bite-sized diet.

### Breakfast

- Cream of Wheat
- Soft and bite-sized scrambled egg
- Ripe avocado cut into bite sizes
- Applesauce
- Thickened tea

### Lunch

- Cream of mushroom soup
- Macaroni with sauce
- Cottage cheese, drained
- Banana cut into bite sizes
- Jell-o
- Milk

### Afternoon Snack

- Yogurt
- Canned peaches, drained and cut into bite sizes
- Apple juice

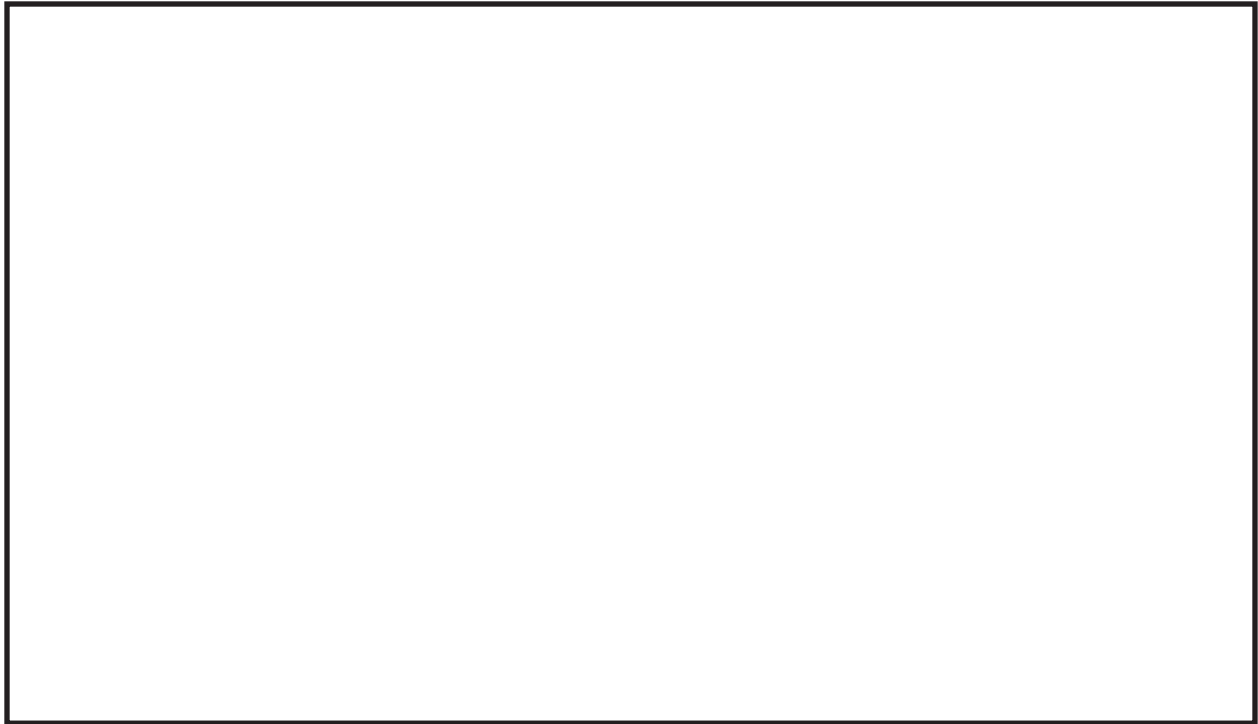
### Dinner

- Baked, deboned salmon cut into bite sizes
- Mashed potatoes
- Steamed cauliflower cut into bite sizes
- Moist cake cut into bite-sized pieces
- Water


### Evening Snack

- Dry cereal softened with milk
- Mango cut into bite sizes
- Ice cream

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 arise.

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