Soft diet

This information has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have if you have been advised to follow a soft diet. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the nutrition and dietetics department (contact details given at the end of this leaflet).

Why do I need a soft diet?
Sometimes a soft diet may be easier to eat. This may be due to:
- swallowing problems
- difficulty chewing
- sore/dry mouth or throat.

You may need this diet for a short time only or it may be required for longer. This booklet gives practical advice to help you follow a soft diet. You may be given individual advice from your speech and language therapist.

How do I prepare a soft diet?
Foods must be soft enough to be broken with a fork. They may require some chewing but should not be hard, crumbly or crisp. Adding sauces or gravy can help make your food moist and easier to swallow.

What can I eat on a soft diet?
Aim to have three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and evening meal. If your appetite is poor or you are losing weight, you should try to have snacks and/or nourishing drinks between meals.

To ensure a balanced diet, you need to include foods from each of the following groups:
- starchy foods
- meat, fish and alternatives
- dairy foods
- fruit and vegetables.

Starchy foods – provide energy and fibre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Choose</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast cereals</td>
<td>Cereals that soften easily with milk</td>
<td>Muesli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dried fruit and nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>Well cooked potatoes</td>
<td>Jacket potato skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mash with butter/margarine, cheese, milk or cream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instant mash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>Use wholemeal or white bread, rather than bread</td>
<td>Crusts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with nuts/seeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta and rice</td>
<td>Pasta and rice dishes that are well cooked and</td>
<td>Al dente pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have sauces</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Meat, fish and alternatives – provide protein**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Choose</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>Dishes with sauces</td>
<td>Gristly or chewy meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casseroles, stews or minced meat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Poached, steamed, boiled or baked with milk and butter</td>
<td>Bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dishes with sauces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tinned fish, such as salmon, tuna or pilchards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>All types</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans, pulses, lentils and nuts</td>
<td>Well cooked and/or tinned varieties</td>
<td>Nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peanut butter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dairy foods – provide protein and calcium**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Choose</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Use as a drink, on cereals or in puddings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milkshakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoghurt/fromage frais</td>
<td>Smooth yoghurt/fromage frais</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek yoghurt (no nuts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Use grated cheeses to enrich foods</td>
<td>Cheeses with dried fruit and nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>such as on vegetables or in sauces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fruit and vegetables – provide vitamins, minerals and fibre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Choose</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>If fresh, peel and cook until soft</td>
<td>Raw vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try frozen or tinned vegetables too</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Use soft fruits like bananas and berries</td>
<td>Hard fruits, skin, seeds and pips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try tinned, stewed or defrosted frozen fruit and fruit compote</td>
<td>Dried fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruit juice/smoothies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foods which may be difficult to manage**

| Fruit skins               | Crackers                                    |                                             |
| Dried fruit               | Nuts                                        |                                             |
| Fruit with seeds and pips | Peanut butter                               |                                             |
| Stringy/fibrous fruit and vegetables like celery or pineapple | Chocolate spread                           |                                             |
| Tough meat                | Biscuits/cake with dried fruit or nuts      |                                             |
| Dry bread/toast           | Danish pastries                             |                                             |
|                           | Flapjacks                                   |                                             |
Ideas for a soft diet

Breakfast:
- Fruit juice
- Cereal such as porridge, Ready Brek or Weetabix with hot milk
- Scrambled eggs or omelette with cheese, milk and butter
- Pancakes with honey or maple syrup
- French toast (eggy bread) with honey
- Yoghurt with fruit compote and honey
- Bread (no crusts) with butter/margarine and jam or honey
- Cheese/tinned tomatoes/baked beans on toast

Snacks:
- Milky drinks, including hot chocolate, cocoa, Horlicks/Ovaltine, milkshakes
- Wotsits, Quavers
- Biscuits – dunk in hot drinks to soften
- Crème caramel or fruit fool
- Dips such as taramasalata, guacamole, hummous
- Yoghurts
- Soft cheeses, such as Philadelphia, Laughing Cow, cottage cheese, Babybel, Dairylea
- Chocolate (without nuts or fruit)
- Moist cake and/or buns

Main meals:
- Minced meat in gravy/bolognase sauce
- Moussaka
- Shepherd’s/cottage pie
- Poached/flaked fish in sauce, or fisherman’s pie
- Corned beef hash
- Casserole or stewed meat
- Risotto
- Kedgeree
- Pasta dishes like macaroni cheese, lasagne, cannelloni or ravioli (including tinned pastas)
- Cauliflower cheese
- Cheese and potato pie
- Skinless sausages
- Dahl curry and rice

Sauces:
For every ¾ pint (400ml) of sauce add:
- 1 tablespoon of milk powder
- Or 1–2oz (30–60g) cheese
- Or 2–4 tablespoons (30–60ml) of double cream

Snack meal:
- Omelette with cheese
- Soup enriched with cheese, cream or milk
- Jacket potato (without skin) with grated cheese, tuna mayonnaise or baked beans
- Baked beans, tinned spaghetti, tinned fish, tinned tomatoes, scrambled egg on toast (without crusts)
Soups:
To make soup more nourishing add:
- 1 tablespoon of milk powder to a bowl of soup (mix powder into a little cold water or milk first to avoid lumps)
- Or 1–2oz (30–60g) grated cheese
- Or cream, crème fraiche or evaporated milk
- Or make up packet or tinned condensed soups with milk instead of water
- Or choose chicken/lentil soups, as they contain protein
- Or add creamed potato, soft cooked rice/pasta, as these contain carbohydrate

Puddings:
- Milky puddings like rice pudding, sago, semolina, tapioca (add jam or honey to these if desired)
- Egg custard
- Trifle
- Sponge/moist cake and custard
- Milk jelly
- Ice cream, frozen yoghurt or sorbet
- Yoghurt, fromage frais, fruit fool, mousse or Angel Delight
- Crème caramel
- Soft tinned/stewed/defrosted frozen fruit or fruit compote with cream/custard
- Soya yoghurt/desserts

Increasing the nutrition in your food
To stop losing weight, it is important to ensure a source of protein and carbohydrate (energy) at each of your meals. The above meal and snack suggestions are good examples of these. Avoid filling up on lots of fruit, vegetables and water at the expense of more nourishing foods and drinks. If you are concerned about your fruit and vegetables intake, speak to your dietitian.

When your appetite is reduced, it is easier to have smaller meals and regular nourishing snacks in between meals to better meet your nutritional needs.

Whilst maintaining a soft diet, avoid low fat, diet and healthy-eating varieties.

Adding the following foods to your savoury and sweet dishes will help you to make your food more nourishing:

**Savoury:** milk, cheese/parsley sauce, cream, butter or margarine, mayonnaise

**Sweet:** milk, custard, butter or margarine, chocolate/butterscotch sauce, evaporated milk, cream, yoghurt, condensed milk

You can also fortify milk by adding four tablespoons of milk powder to one pint of full cream milk. Whisk this with a fork or blender and use in place of ordinary milk, as well as in drinks, milky puddings, soups and sauces.
Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the nutrition and dietetics department on 020 7188 2010 or 020 7188 4128 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). If we are unable to take your call, please leave us a message and we will call you back.

Useful sources of information

NHS Choices – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.


Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy’s and St Thomas’ hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust’s services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’
t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

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Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC) – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas’ Hospital.

t: 020 7188 3416

NHS Direct – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 0845 4647  w: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years.

To join, please call 0848 143 4017, email members@gstt.nhs.uk or visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk