



# Level 6 Soft and Bite-sized Food

Your speech and language therapist has recommended that your food is bite-sized and a soft texture.



# What are Level 6 Soft and Bite-sized Foods?

- Soft, tender and moist throughout with no separate thin liquid
- Can be mashed/broken down with pressure from a fork
- Chewing is required before swallowing
- Chopped into bite-sized pieces, no bigger than 1.5cm before serving

# Why do I need soft and bite-sized foods?

Soft and bite-sized foods may be used if you have difficulties chewing or swallowing regular foods.

# Tips for serving and presenting foods

- Many soft foods will just require chopping to the required size
- Present each food separately. Don't mash everything together
- If sauces and gravy are needed, mix well into the food or make sure they are thickened to the correct consistency
- Do not use water, low calorie or low fat liquids to soften food. Instead use full fat milk or cream
- Drain off any excess liquid before serving
- Vary flavours by adding soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, tomato ketchup, curry powder or spices to savoury dishes before blending or adding seedless jam to sweet dishes

# Ideas for soft and bite-sized foods

Many foods that are 'mashable' are suitable, however, some may need special preparation.

## Meat

- Pieces of soft, tender meat must be served no bigger than 1.5cm. Mince must be fine with no hard bits or gristle. For example, stews, casseroles, shepherd's pie. Sausages with skins removed and chopped into 1.5cm pieces

## Eggs

- Poach, boil, scramble or make into a soft moist omelette. Chop into 1.5cm pieces

## Vegetables

- Any vegetables that can be mashed easily e.g. soft boiled carrots, swede, cauliflower, sweet potato or broccoli. These should be chopped into 1.5cm pieces (vegetables) before serving

## Fruits

- Fruits that can be easily mashed e.g. mashed ripe banana, tinned pears. These should be chopped into 1.5cm pieces
- Stewed, tinned or pureed fruit may be suitable. Remove any skin, pips or seeds

## Potatoes

- Soft boiled potatoes chopped into 1.5cm pieces, mashed potatoes or the centre of a jacket potato

## Fish

- Soft enough to break into pieces with a fork and chopped into 1.5cm pieces. It should be served with thick sauce or gravy e.g. steamed fish with parsley sauce

## Pasta

- Use soft-cooked pasta. Chopped up if pieces are bigger than 1.5cm in size

## Cheese

- Use cottage cheese, cream cheese or grated cheese

## Breakfasts

- Porridge and wheat biscuit cereals are suitable. They must be served thick with no large lumps and with all liquid fully absorbed
- Smooth, full fat yoghurt with fruit as described above

## Desserts

- Smooth yoghurts, fromage frais and mousses
- Milk puddings e.g. semolina, thick rice pudding, thick custard
- Plain sponge pudding with thick custard. Chop or mash before serving

## These foods are NOT suitable for Level 6 Soft and Bite-sized diets

- Ice cream and jelly if you are on thickened fluids
- No juicy foods where juice separates off in the mouth e.g. watermelon
- No mixed textures e.g. soup with bits in
- No hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, stringy, dry, crunchy or crumbly food
- No hard, chewy or sticky sweets e.g. mints, gums, chocolate and marshmallow
- No bread
- Avoid chips, roast potatoes, crisps or crispy edges on potato toppings

## Check before serving

- No hard pieces, crusts or skins have formed during cooking or standing
- Fluid/gravy/sauce or custard in or on the food has not thinned out or separated off

## Meeting your nutritional needs

It may be difficult to meet your body's needs for food and drinks when you have swallowing difficulties. It can take longer for you to finish a meal and sometimes liquidised or pureed, minced or soft meals are less nutritious than normal meals.

For this reason, it is important to plan your meals to make sure you meet your protein, calorie and overall nutrient needs. Otherwise, you may lose weight. It is important to weigh yourself every week and keep note of your weight. Ideally, you should weigh yourself on the same day each week and at the same time such as in the morning, before breakfast and getting dressed.

If you have been unwell, it is particularly important to make sure you eat and drink enough every day. This may help prevent weight loss and help you regain any weight you have already lost.

## What changes can I make to the way I eat?

- Eat 'little and often'. Aim for 3 meals a day and at least 2 nutritious drinks or snacks between meals
- Try to include some carbohydrate at every meal, for example cereal, porridge, pasta, rice or potato. Carbohydrates help to keep up your energy levels throughout the day
- Try to eat a source of protein in at least 2 of your main meals, for example chicken, egg, fish, beans or meat. Protein is your body's 'building block' and is vital to maintain muscle mass, fight infection and repair wounds
- Try not to drink too much around mealtimes as this may make you feel fuller quicker and prevent you from finishing your meal
- Try to add extra calories and protein to your meal to make it as nourishing as possible
- Try to have 1 pint of milk per day





## Tips to improve your dietary intake

People who need modified texture foods may find it difficult to eat all the food they need. Here are some tips that may help prevent you from losing weight.

Talk to your speech and language therapist or dietitian to see which of these foods are suitable for you.

- ✓ Make sure you use full fat dairy products instead of low fat or skimmed options. You could fortify milk by adding a few tablespoons of dried milk powder to each litre of milk. Use this for drinking and cooking. This can only be done if you are taking normal drinks not thickened fluids. Try adding full fat grated cheese to soups, pasta, vegetables and omelettes. You can use full fat yoghurt to make high calorie smoothies
- ✓ Mash vegetables and potatoes with milk, cream, butter, margarine or cream cheese. Try adding some grated cheese
- ✓ For quick and nutritious breakfasts add full fat milk, cream, honey, sugar or seedless jam to your porridge, yoghurt or cereal

- ✓ Blend pureed fruit with cream or custard
- ✓ Make up instant soups, sauces or gravies with milk instead of water
- ✓ Make instant coffee, hot chocolate, malt drinks with milk and enrich with a spoonful of cream
- ✓ Use sugar in tea and coffee, breakfast cereals and desserts
- ✓ Milkshakes can be made with ice cream, yoghurt and fresh fruit. Make sure there are no bits or lumps according to your recommended diet texture
- ✓ Eggs are a good source of protein and can be boiled, scrambled or poached and then blended
- ✓ Try different types of beans and lentils which are a good source of protein and fibre and are naturally soft. Make sure to remove any husks by blending well or sieving

If you are concerned you are losing weight, please speak to your speech and language therapist, dietitian, doctor or nurse.

For more ideas on different foods speak to your speech and language therapist.



For more information  
on Level 6 Soft and  
Bite-sized Food  
consistency see  
[www.iddsi.org](http://www.iddsi.org)

## For further help or information

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