



# Safer swallowing advice

## Level 5 (minced and moist)

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Version 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

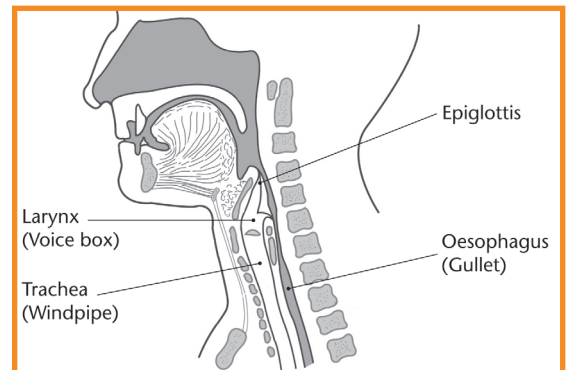
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### > About this leaflet

As you are currently having difficulty swallowing, your speech and language therapist recommends that you change the consistency of your food.

The consistency we recommend for you is:  
**Level 5 (minced and moist).**

You should follow these recommendations at all times. Depending on the nature of your difficulties, your speech and language therapist may review these recommendations.



### > What is a Level 5 (minced and moist) diet?

- ✓ Soft and moist, but with no liquid leaking or dripping from the food.
- ✓ Biting is not required.
- ✓ Minimal chewing required.
- ✓ Lumps of 4mm in size for adults, 2mm for a child.
- ✓ Food can be easily mashed with just a little pressure from a fork.
- ✓ Should be able to scoop food onto a fork, with no liquid falling off the fork.
- X No mixed (thick-thin) textures.
- X No hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, stringy, dry, crispy, crunchy or crumbly bits.
- X No pips, seeds, pith or inside skin. No skins or outer shells e.g. on peas, grapes. No husks.
- X No skin, bone or gristle.
- X No round or long-shaped foods e.g. sausages, grapes, sweets. No hard chunks e.g. pieces of apple.
- X No sticky foods e.g. cheese chunks, marshmallows.
- X No 'floppy' foods e.g. lettuce, cucumber, uncooked baby spinach leaves.
- X No juicy food where juice separates off in the mouth to a mixed texture e.g. watermelon.

Please note: In hospital this diet is called Level 5 – Minced and moist. If you are speaking to any staff (e.g. doctor or nurse) please refer to the diet as Level 5 (minced and moist).

### Preparing a Level 5 (minced and moist) diet

Most foods can be mashed if they are cooked until soft and moist and served with a thick gravy or sauce. The thickness of the food will depend on how much liquid is added.

- **Meat and fish**

Must be finely minced or chopped to 4mm lump size for adults (2mm for a child) and served in a thick, smooth, non-pouring sauce or gravy. If the meat is very tender it can sometimes be cut into small pieces and then mashed or minced with a sauce. Please note that some tougher meats may need to be processed in a food processor to achieve a finely mashed consistency. There should be some variation in texture as long as it does not require too much chewing. If it cannot be finely minced it should be pureed.

- **Vegetables**

Well cooked, finely mashed or use a blender to finely chop into 4mm lump size pieces for an adult, 2mm for a child (drain any excess liquid).

- **Casserole, Stew or Curry**

Must be very thick. Can contain meat, fish or vegetable if finely mashed and are fully mixed in.

- **Bread**

No bread due to high risk of choking.

- **Rice**

Requires a thick, smooth, non-pouring sauce to moisten and hold the rice together. Rice should not be sticky or gluey and should not separate into individual grains.

- **Cereal**

The texture of very thick smooth porridge or the texture of fully softened wheat-biscuit breakfast cereal, mixed well with a spoon and with milk fully absorbed. Any milk or fluid must not separate off (i.e. no loose fluid, no mixed (thick – thin) textures).

- **Fruit**

Serve finely mashed or use a blender to finely chop into 4mm lump sized pieces for an adult, 2mm for a child (drain any excess liquid).

- **Desserts**

The texture of very thick, smooth yogurt (no bits) or stewed apple mashed in very thick custard. Or the texture of soft sponge cake with smooth filling, fully softened by mashing and mixing in with very thick, smooth (non-pouring) custard. No ice-cream or jelly if you require thickened fluids (because these can change to normal fluid thickness in the mouth).

Foods that are mashed easily include:

- Pasta – soft pasta dishes mash well if extra sauce is added. e.g. macaroni and cheese.
- Potatoes – these can be mashed with butter or margarine and milk.
- Vegetables – carrot, turnip, broccoli and cauliflower (with no stalks).
- Fruit – bananas, strawberries, stewed apples and pears.

Foods which do not mash well include nuts, peas, sweetcorn, coconut, and some breakfast cereals.



Check before serving and eating that:

- No hard pieces, crust or skin have formed during cooking, heating and standing.
- Fluid, gravy, sauce or custard in or on the food has not thinned out or separated off.
- Spoon tilt test. Food sample holds its shape on the spoon and falls off fairly easily if the spoon is tilted or lightly flicked.
- Fork test. For adults the lump size is 4mm, about the same size as the gap between the prongs of a standard dinner fork.

### Examples of suitable foods

**Breakfast:** Weetabix soaked in milk (make sure milk is fully absorbed – no loose fluids)  
Porridge  
Thick and creamy yogurt  
Mashed fruit  
Fruit juice (should be thickened if you need thickened fluids)

**Lunch and Dinner:** Smooth Soup  
Inside of a jacket potato with tuna, egg mayonnaise or spreading cheese (finely mashed)  
Scrambled egg (mashed)  
Cheese and potato pie mashed (no pastry)  
Boiled egg (mashed with butter)  
Soft omelette (finely mashed)  
Mashed cauliflower cheese  
Finely minced meat or fish served with a thick sauce  
Mashed potatoes made with butter and milk  
Mashed pasta or rice in a thick sauce  
Mince and potatoes (mashed)  
Haggis, neeps and tatties (finely mashed) Corned beef hash or stovies (finely mashed)  
Spaghetti bolognese (finely mashed)  
Meat or chicken curry and rice (finely mashed)  
Soft well cooked vegetables mashed (must not be 'stringy' or 'woody', see 'high risk foods' on page 4)

**Desserts:** Milk pudding  
Stewed fruit and custard (finely mashed)  
Rice pudding  
Semolina  
Yoghurts  
Mousse  
Angel delight  
Mashed banana  
Trifle with soft fruit (finely mashed)  
Soft tinned fruit e.g. pears or peaches (mashed)



## Points to remember for you or whoever is making your meals:

- Presentation of this diet is extremely important. It needs to look and smell as good as possible, and it helps if you know what flavour to expect. It doesn't look very attractive if foods are mashed together.
- If the food does not look attractive it may affect how much you eat which could in time lead to unwanted weight loss.
- Remove tough skins and large seeds before mashing.

## High risk foods

Below is a list of 'high risk foods'. These are the foods that are most likely to make you cough and choke and therefore should be avoided.

- Stringy fibrous textures e.g. pineapple, runner beans, celery.
- Vegetable and fruit skins including peas, grapes, baked beans, soya beans, and black eyed beans.
- Mixed consistencies e.g. cereals which do not blend with milk (e.g. Muesli), mince and thin gravy, soup with lumps.
- Crunchy foods e.g. toast, dry biscuits, crisps.
- Crumbly items e.g. bread crusts, pie crusts, dry biscuits.

## Swallowing strategies

Here is some general advice which you may find useful. Please note not all of the items will necessarily apply to you. Please concentrate on the ones which your speech and language therapist has ticked specifically for you.

- Sit in an upright position.
- Take your time.
- Try to eat in a quiet place, with few distractions.
- Chew food well and make sure that your mouth is empty before taking another mouthful.
- Only heat up small portions of food at a time so that food does not get cold.
- Smaller, more frequent meals may be less tiring.
- Keep your chin tucked down towards your chest when swallowing.
- Swallow several times after each mouthful.
- Take regular alternate sips of fluid when eating to help clear any residue that may be in your mouth or throat.
- Clear your throat regularly when eating and drinking, then swallow again.
- Cough after swallowing.
- Consult your GP or pharmacist about taking medication in syrup or soluble form. **Do not crush tablets or open up capsules without checking with your pharmacist that it is safe to do this.**



## Things to avoid:

- Foods that you find difficult (for many people these will be hard, dry or stringy foods). See also 'high risk foods' on page 4.
- Taking very large mouthfuls.
- Tipping your head back.
- Eating and drinking when you feel short of breath.
- Talking while eating and drinking.
- Straws unless specifically recommended by your speech and language therapist.

Please refer to any additional information sheets your speech and language therapist has given you.

Your speech and language therapist also recommends the following advice specifically for your needs:

## Fluids

You have been advised to drink **normal thin fluids**. If so, please ignore the section below.

You have been advised to drink \_\_\_\_\_ **thickened fluids** (please refer to the section below for information on how to thicken your fluids).

Drinks descriptor and level	
<b>Level 1</b> (Slightly thick)	Leaves a coating on an empty glass and can be easily taken through a straw (if recommended).
<b>Level 2</b> (Mildly thick)	Leaves a thin coat on the back of a spoon, can be drunk from a cup and easily taken through a straw (if recommended).
<b>Level 3</b> (Moderately thick)	Leaves a thick coat on the back of a spoon, can be drunk from a cup, but too thick to be taken through a straw.
<b>Level 4</b> (Extremely thick )	Unable to be drunk through a straw or a cup due to thickness. Needs to be taken from a spoon.

There are several different brands of 'thickening agent'. Please refer to the manufacturer's guidelines (usually on the side of the tin) for details on how much thickener needs to be added to your drink. Please check the fluid is the correct consistency before drinking.

**Please note: Thickener and pre-thickened drinks are available on prescription from your GP.**

## Further information

Please contact the Speech and Language Therapy department if:

- You or your relatives have any worries or questions about your swallowing problem.
- Your swallow deteriorates.
- You develop new swallowing difficulties.

Your Speech and Language Therapy department phone number is **0141 951 5121**.

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