



Safer swallowing advice

Level 7 (easy to chew)

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Version 1

Name: _____

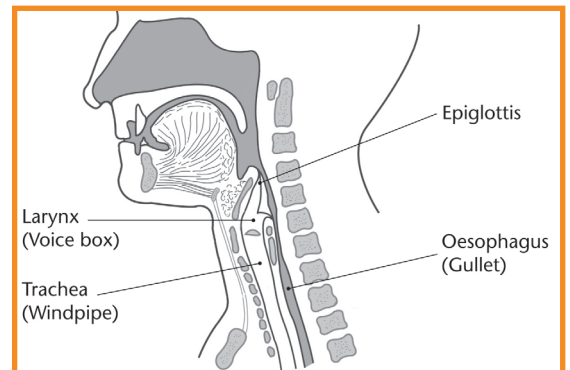
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> About this leaflet

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

The consistency that we recommend for you is:
Level 7 (easy to chew).

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 7 (easy to chew) diet?

- ✓ Normal, everyday foods of soft and tender texture.
- ✓ Food piece size is not restricted in Level 7, therefore foods may be a range of sizes.
- ✓ You should be able to “bite off” pieces of soft and tender food and choose bite sizes that are safe to chew and swallow.
- ✓ You should be able to chew pieces of soft and tender food, so they are safe to swallow without tiring easily.
- X No hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, stringy, dry, crispy, crunchy or crumbly bits. No pips, seeds, pith, bones, gristle or husks.
- X No hard chunks e.g. pieces of apple, grapes, boiled sweets, nuts, dried fruit, raw vegetables.
- X No sticky or chewy foods e.g. cheese chunks, marshmallows, gummy sweets.

Please note: In hospital this diet is called Level 7 (easy to chew). If you are speaking to any staff (e.g. doctor or nurse) please refer to the diet as Level 7 (easy to chew).

Preparing a Level 7 (easy to chew) diet

Level 7 (easy to chew) foods should break apart easily with the side of a fork or spoon. You can test if a food is soft enough by pressing down with a fork. When the fork is lifted the food should be completely squashed and does not regain its shape.

- **Meat**
Cooked until tender. If you cannot serve soft and tender, serve as minced and moist i.e. finely mashed or minced down into 4mm pieces.
- **Fish**
Cooked soft enough to break apart easily with the side of a fork or spoon.
- **Fruit**
Soft enough to break apart into smaller pieces with the side of a fork or spoon (drain any excess liquid). Do not use the fibrous parts of fruit (for example the white parts of an orange). Be careful when eating fruit with a high water content, where the juice separates from the solid in the mouth during chewing (e.g. melon).
- **Bread**
Check with your Speech and Language Therapist for direction about bread, sandwiches and appropriate sandwich fillings.
- **Cereal**
Serve with texture softened. Drain excess liquid before serving.
- **Rice**
Does not have any special cooking requirements at this level.

Examples of suitable foods

Breakfast: Soft fruit
Cornflakes or Rice Krispies (well soaked in milk)
Porridge
Weetabix

Lunch and Dinner: Soup
Sandwich (no hard crusts) with soft filling e.g. tuna mayonnaise, egg mayonnaise (if your speech and language therapist agrees)
Scrambled egg
Soft omelette
Inside of a jacket potato with tuna, egg mayonnaise or spreading cheese
Potato waffles
Tender roast meat in gravy
Fish in sauce
Fish pie
Fish cakes and sauce
Tuna mayonnaise
Macaroni cheese
Spaghetti bolognaise
Pasta in sauce
Risotto
Sweet and sour dishes with rice
(provided meat and vegetables are soft and tender)
Corned beef hash or stovies
Casseroled meats and stews



Black pudding (skin removed)
Curry and rice
Quiche (avoid hard crusts)
Shepherds pie with gravy
Haggis, neeps and tatties
Soft well cooked vegetables (must not be 'stringy' or 'woody', see high risk foods)
Cauliflower cheese

Desserts:

Milk pudding
Stewed fruit and custard
Rice pudding
Semolina
Yoghurts
Mousse
Angel delight
Trifle with soft fruit
Sponge and custard
Crème caramel
Cheesecake and cream (no base)
Jelly and ice cream (if you do not need thickened fluids)
Soft tinned fruit

Points to remember:

You can make food softer and more moist by adding a sauce or gravy. Harder foods like biscuits can be softened with hot drinks, milk or cream.

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 you should avoid them.

- Stringy fibrous textures e.g. pineapple, runner beans, celery.
- Vegetable and fruit skins including apples, grapes, baked beans, soya beans, and black eyed beans.
- Mixed consistencies e.g. cereals which do not blend with milk (e.g. Muesli).
- 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.
- Take small mouthfuls.
- 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 3.
 - 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 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	
Level 1 (Slightly thick)	Leaves a coating on an empty glass and can be easily taken through a straw (if recommended).
Level 2 (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).
Level 3 (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.
Level 4 (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 of 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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