Eating after jaw surgery

After jaw surgery it is important for you to eat well as healing requires good nutrition. This leaflet aims to help you achieve a suitable diet after your surgery.

You may initially need to eat and drink using a plastic syringe, a small spoon or a straw. This is due to any facial swelling you may have. As this reduces you should be able to drink from a cup and eat with a dessert spoon.

It is often best to take smaller meals or snacks more frequently, rather than relying on the typical three meals per day.

Puree/liquidised diet
Initially, you may find that you need to make your food into a liquid form using a blender or liquidiser. To do this you may need to add fluid to your food, but it is best if you avoid diluting it with water as this will reduce the nutritional value.

Try and use milk, fruit juice, sauces, gravy, soup or stock instead as these will provide better flavours and ensure a good nutritional intake.

When using a liquidiser a meal looks more appetising if you try to keep food items separate rather than mixing them all together. It will also look more attractive if foods of a variety of colours are used.

How can I get the most out of my foods?
Although you are not having solid foods you can still get all the nourishment you need from liquidised foods and drinks by having a variety of foods that are good sources of protein, energy and vitamins.

Ideas to try
Milk
- This can be made more nutritious by fortifying it. To do this add four, heaped tablespoons of dried milk powder to each pint of full cream milk. You may find it dissolves better by first adding a little warm milk to the powder to form a paste and then add the rest of the milk.
- Keep this in the fridge and use it instead of normal milk to make up milky drinks, packet soups, sauces, custards, porridge or jellies.

Cereals
- Breakfast cereals such a Weetabix, Ready Brek and porridge become very soft when soaked in plenty of milk and can then be easily liquidised.
- You then can add sugar, jam, syrup or honey to taste and so increase the energy content.

Soups and gravy
- Liquidised meat, fish or grated cheese can be added to soups.
- Cream is a good way to enrich soups and packet soups can be made using fortified milk. Adding Marmite or Bovril to soup or gravy can also provide other valuable vitamins.
- Try to choose ‘cream of…’ concentrated soups whenever possible.
Meat, poultry, fish, and alternatives
- These should be liquidised with savoury sauces (made with fortified milk).
- You can try adding half a teaspoon of Marmite or Bovril to gravy.

Carbohydrates
- Mash potato with milk and butter/margarine or cream cheese to make it smooth and add nutrition.
- You may also find liquidised pasta/ rice/ couscous is acceptable served with a flavoursome sauce.

Fruit and vegetables
- Most fruit and vegetables can be liquidised or stewed very easily.
- Try adding cream, sugar or honey to fruit, and butter/margarine or cheese sauce to vegetables.

Desserts
- Try to have desserts after meals. If necessary, wait a while between the main course and dessert, or use as snacks.
- You can make packet desserts with milk. Add extra cream, evaporated/condensed milk or sugar for extra energy.
- Include milk puddings such as rice pudding, custard and semolina.
- Try making jelly with evaporated milk or Greek yoghurt instead of water.
- Some other suitable desserts are chocolate mousse, crème caramel and crème brûlée.

The following foods are difficult to liquidise and are therefore best avoided:
- Stringy foods such as green beans and celery
- Crunchy foods such as muesli, crisps, toast, nuts and crusty bread
- Foods with skins or husks such as sausages, peas and sweetcorn
- Chewy foods such as tough meat and toffees

After a few weeks you may find that you are able to move on from a liquid diet to a soft diet.

Soft diet
Many everyday foods will be naturally soft enough for you to eat. Other foods can be softened by being mashed with a fork, pushed through a sieve or mixed with extra sauce or gravy.

Breakfast ideas (these can also be snacks):
- Porridge/Ready Brek made with milk
- Weetabix soaked in fortified milk
- Scrambled egg with cream and smoked salmon
- Mashed banana with Greek yoghurt and honey
- Smooth yoghurt/fromage frais

Main meal and snack ideas
- Meat, poultry and alternatives. Many well-cooked, tinned or ready-cooked meals can be served with extra sauce or gravy.
- Minced quorn, TVP or tofu are suitable alternatives for vegetarians.
- Also try foods made with lentils (dhal).

Fish
- Choose boneless fresh and tinned fish.
- Cook by steaming, baking, poaching or microwaving.
- Serve in a sauce.

Eggs
- Try scrambled eggs or make an omelette or soufflé.
- Add extra butter, margarine or cream to make them softer.
Cheese
- Soft cheeses, cheese spread, cream cheese and cottage cheese are suitable.
- Try adding grated cheese to mashed potatoes, sauces and soups.

Pasta/rice
- A wide range of pasta can be used to make soft dishes
- Serve with plenty of sauce, preferable creamy/cheesy sauces or add grated cheese to tomato sauces.
- Tinned pastas, such as ravioli, are quick and easy alternatives.

Potatoes
- Serve mashed with milk, gravy or sauce.
- Jacket potato but without the skin may also be suitable.

Vegetables
- Fresh, frozen or tinned vegetables can be cooked until soft.
- They can be mashed or creamed with butter or margarine.

Fruit
- Fresh, frozen and tinned can be mashed, stewed or liquidised.
- Remove all pips, skin and seeds.
- Serve with evaporated milk, cream or ice-cream.

Desserts
- Those suitable for a puree diet are also useful in a soft diet.
- Try also soft sponge puddings, served with custard or ice-cream.

Drinks
- Use fortified milk when making tea, coffee or milky drinks.
- Include pure fruit or vegetable juice every day to increase your vitamin intake.
- Drinking full cream milk is advised.
- Blend fortified milk with fruit and ice-cream to make a tasty milkshake or smoothie.

There are some special drinks which are high in protein and energy, e.g., Build-Up or Complan. These are useful taken between meals for the first few weeks and are available from chemists and some supermarkets in a number of flavours, both sweet and savoury.

As the weeks progress, try to gradually include more solid foods – as much as you are able to manage.

If you are losing weight, contact your GP or consultant in order to be referred to a dietician.

Advice if you have diabetes
You can still follow the ideas in this diet sheet but make sure you use diet or low-sugar products. Do not add sugar, honey or syrup to food and drinks.