

## Patient information factsheet

# Level 6 diet (soft and bite-sized) for adults

Patient's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We have given you this factsheet because a speech and language therapist (SLT) has advised that you should follow a level 6 diet (soft and bite-sized). It explains what a level 6 diet is, what soft and bite-sized foods are and some meal ideas to try at home.

### What is a level 6 diet?

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) is a global initiative to improve the lives of people living with dysphagia (swallowing difficulties). They have produced a framework based on the consistency of food and fluid. The IDDSI framework is made up of levels and describes food textures and drink thickness. Level 6 is soft and bite-sized food.



The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative 2016 [iddsi.org/framework](http://iddsi.org/framework)

We may recommend that you follow this diet if:

- it has been prescribed or recommended by your doctor
- you have difficulty chewing food, but can still chew bite-sized pieces
- you have difficulty clearing food from your mouth
- you get tired easily when you are eating

Soft and bite-sized foods require less chewing, so you should find them easier to swallow.

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## What are soft and bite-sized foods?

- These foods are soft, tender and moist.
- 'Bite-sized' pieces that are no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size.
- They contain no separate thin liquid.
- They can be mashed or broken down with pressure from a fork or spoon.
- You should not need a knife to cut these foods.
- To check whether food is soft enough, press down on it with the back of a fork until your thumb nail starts to turn white. If the food can be squashed and does not return to its original shape then it is soft enough.

## Examples of soft and bite-sized foods

- Meat cooked until tender and chopped into pieces (no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size).
- Fish cooked until soft enough to break into pieces (no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size).
- Soft fruit that is chopped into pieces (no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size). Drain any excess liquid. Do not use the fibrous parts of fruits, such as the white parts of an orange. Be extra careful if you are eating fruit with a high water content, such as melon.
- Vegetables steamed or boiled until tender. The final cooked size should be no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm. Stir fried vegetables are **not** suitable.
- Cereal fully soaked in milk with pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm. Drain any excess liquid before serving.
- Rice should not be sticky or gluey and should not separate into individual grains when cooked and served. Rice may require a thick, smooth, non-pouring sauce to moisten and hold it together.

**Please check with us about eating bread, as this is a high choking risk.**

## Suggested soft and bite-sized meal ideas

### Breakfast

- Porridge or Weetabix soaked with milk (can be hot milk)
- Mashed banana
- Scrambled egg (creamy or moist)
- Smooth yoghurt or fromage frais

### Main meals

- Thick soups that have been strained to remove bits
- Minced meat, chicken or turkey
- Smooth pâté
- Houmous
- Pasta (cook and mash with a sauce)
- Cauliflower cheese or macaroni cheese
- Dhal (channa or moong) is suitable if the lentils are cooked until soft and mashed down
- Potatoes, sweet potato, yams or plantain (mashed with milk and butter, margarine, ghee or gravy)

### Desserts

- Blancmange
- Crème caramel
- Smooth, thick yoghurt
- Smooth milk puddings
- Egg custard

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- Smooth mousse or instant whips
- Pureed fruit (without skins, seeds or pips)
- Smooth fruit fools (without skins, seeds or pips)

## Ready-made soft and bite-sized meals

Ready-made soft and bite-sized meals are available from some companies, such as Wiltshire Farm Foods and Oakhouse Foods.

## Foods to avoid

- Stringy, fibrous foods, such as pineapple, runner beans, celery, lettuce and bacon.
- Food with skins, such as grapes, peas, baked beans, sausages and pulses.
- Mixed consistency foods, such as cereals that do not blend with milk (granola), mince and thin gravy or soups with lumps.
- Crunchy or crumbly foods, such as toast, pastries (including puff pastry, filo pastry, croissants, pain au chocolat and Danish pastries) and biscuits.
- Hard foods, such as boiled sweets, nuts and seeds.
- Marshmallows.

If you need thickened fluids, you should also avoid jelly, ice cream and frozen yogurt, as these will melt and become thin fluids in your mouth.

## Contact us

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## Useful links

[www.iddsi.org](http://www.iddsi.org)

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital please visit **[www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds)**