

# Information on a Soft and Bite-sized Diet

International Diet Descriptor Level **6**

The medical term for swallowing difficulties is 'dysphagia'.

Dysphagia occurs due to a number of medical and surgical conditions, such as neurological disorders, head and neck conditions, swallowing difficulties after surgery, frailty and respiratory disorders.

Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) assess swallowing difficulties and advise on the most appropriate diet consistency.

## Why has a Soft and Bite-sized diet been recommended?

**A Soft and Bite-sized diet may be recommended due to the following reasons:**

- You have difficulty chewing larger pieces of food
- You have weakness or incoordination of the muscles of the mouth and/or throat
- You have difficulty clearing food residue
- You have fatigue issues
- You are at risk of choking
- There is the risk of your food going 'down the wrong way' i.e. into the lungs. This is called aspiration

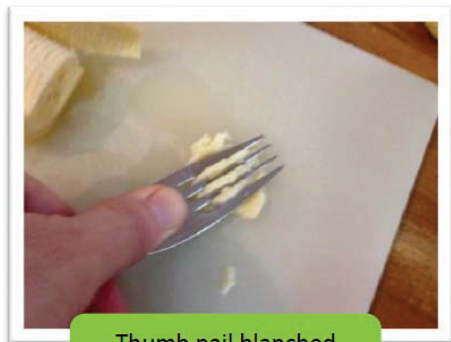
## What does a Soft and Bite-sized diet look like?

**Food should:**

- Be soft, tender, and moist throughout with no separate thin liquid
- Have bite-sized pieces = maximum 15mm (about the width of an adult thumbnail)
- Require chewing before swallowing
- Be soft enough that it could be mashed and broken down with a fork or spoon

**Fork test:**

The best way to find out whether your food is suitable is with a fork test. Your food should cut easily with pressure from a fork.



Thumb nail blanched to white



Sample squashes and does not return to its original shape when pressure is released

## Breakfast ideas

- Egg (scrambled, poached, boiled), diced to maximum particle size
- Soft fruits e.g. banana, ripe peaches, melon, nectarines, diced to maximum particle size
- Porridge, Ready Brek or instant oat cereal
- Weetabix (well soaked – no loose milk)

## Main meal ideas

- Well cooked soft pasta and thick sauce, diced to maximum particle size
- Steamed, poached or baked fish in thick sauce, diced to maximum particle size
- Plain, soft omelette or egg (see breakfast), diced to maximum particle size
- Minced or diced meat in thick sauce
- Skinless sausages, diced to maximum particle size
- Thick dahl

## Potatoes and vegetables

- Well boiled potatoes, diced to maximum particle size
- Moist mashed potato or root vegetables
- Inside of a jacket potato with a soft filling
- Peeled, well cooked vegetables, diced to maximum particle size

## Desserts and snack ideas

- Plain moist cake, diced to maximum particle size. Can add thick custard or cream
- Steamed plain pudding, diced to maximum particle size. Can add custard or cream
- Soft tinned, fresh, or stewed fruit, diced to maximum particle size. Can add thick yoghurt, ice cream, cream or evaporated milk
- Thick and creamy yoghurt or fromage frais
- Angel Delight
- Mousse
- Thick custard
- Semolina, rice or other milk pudding
- Smooth fruit fools
- Thick smooth soup (dependent on fluid thickness recommendations – please see advice from your Speech and Language Therapist)
- Banana, diced to maximum particle size
- Avocado, diced to maximum particle size
- Smooth dips e.g. taramasalata, hummus.

If you have any queries or require further advice then please do not hesitate to contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department at:

**Royal Sussex County Hospital** 01273 696955 Ext. 4891 (Inpatients)  
**Eastern Road** Ext. 4931 (Neurosurgery)  
**Brighton** Ext. 4590 (Stroke)  
**BN2 5BE** Ext. 7211 (Head & Neck)

**Princess Royal Hospital** 01444 441881  
**Lewes Road** Ext. 8057 (Inpatients)  
**Haywards Heath** Ext. 5770 (Sussex Rehabilitation  
**RH16 4EX** Centre)

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The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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