

# Having a level 4 pureed diet when you have dysphagia (difficulty swallowing)

Speech and Language

Patient information

# What is this information about?

This information is about having a pureed diet.

**It explains:**

- what dysphagia is
- why you may need a pureed diet if you have dysphagia
- what your pureed diet food should be like.

It also gives you some ideas for pureed diet foods that you can try for breakfast, your main meals, desserts and snacks.

# Why have I been given this information?

You (or your relative or carer) have been given this information because your Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) has assessed how well you are able to swallow.

They have found that you have dysphagia (difficulty swallowing in the usual way) and recommend that you have a pureed diet.

**Following the advice in this information will help you to:**

- understand what your diet involves
- help you to avoid health conditions (some of which can be serious) that dysphagia can cause.

# What is dysphagia?

If you have dysphagia, it means that it is more difficult than usual for you to swallow.

People may get dysphagia because they have a medical condition or after they have had some types of operation which affect swallowing.

## For example, they may have:

- a condition which affects their nervous system or brain (a neurological condition)
- a head or neck condition
- difficulty swallowing after an operation such as an operation on their neck, throat or mouth
- frailty because of old age or a medical condition
- breathing (respiratory) conditions.

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) check swallowing difficulties and advise people on the right thickness and 'lumpiness' (consistency) of food that they should have in their diet.

## Why has my SLT advised me to have a pureed diet?

Your SLT may recommend a pureed diet for you if:

- it is difficult for you to chew larger pieces of food
- your mouth or throat muscles (or both) are weaker than usual and may not be working together as they should
- you get tired (fatigued) easily when eating
- food stays in your mouth or throat for longer than it should after you have finished eating. Doing things such as swallowing or coughing may not clear it.
- there is a chance that:
  - you may choke on your food
  - your food may go 'down the wrong way' (into your lungs). This is called aspiration.

# What should my food be like if I am on a pureed diet?



Picture showing a pureed food meal.

## When you are on a pureed diet you should:

- have a smooth texture and not need chewing
- have no lumps
- not be sticky
- not have liquid which is separated from the solid food
- usually be eaten with a fork (or sometimes a spoon)
- be able to be shaped. For example, piped, layered or moulded.
- fall off a spoon in a single spoonful if the spoon is tilted.  
When it lands on the plate it should hold its shape.
- be too thick to:
  - drink from a cup
  - suck through a straw.

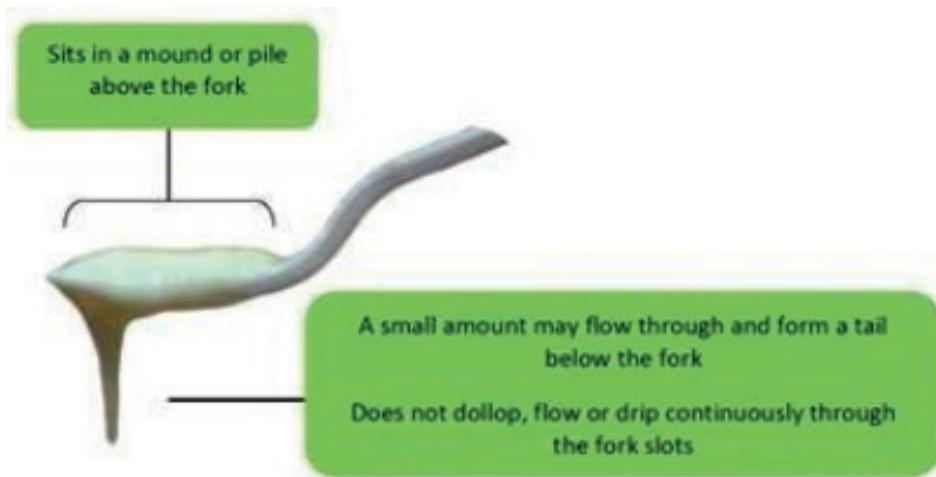


Illustration showing the right consistency for pureed diet food

## What tips should I follow to help me to prepare my pureed food in the right way?

- Remove things such as skin, bone or gristle before you puree your food.
- Use gravy, stock, soup, sauces, milk or fruit juice instead of water to add liquid. This gives you more energy and nutrients in your food and tastes better.
- Use a blender to puree the different types of food that will make up your meal separately. For example, make separate purees of meat, vegetables and potatoes. Keep this separate on your plate.
- If your food is too thin, add thickener.
- If your food has lumps or bits in it (such as stringy meat or fruit pips), sieve it after you have pureed it.
- Avoid reheating your food more than once. Never re-freeze it.

# What ideas for food can I try?

## For breakfast try:

- Ready Brek or smooth porridge
- Weetabix (well soaked with no loose milk)
- pureed scrambled eggs with extra milk and cheese
- pureed and sieved baked beans
- pureed fruit. Peel all fruit (tinned or fresh) before you puree it. If it has bits in it, sieve it too.
- smooth yoghurt or fromage frais
- smooth breakfast drinks. You should only have smooth breakfast drinks of the 'thickness' that your SLT has advised is right for you. Please see the advice that they have given you.

## For your main meals try:

- pureed meat and gravy
- pureed, cooked fish in thick sauce. For example, cheese sauce or white sauce.
- pureed pasta in thick sauce
- pureed, boiled white rice in thick sauce. For example, pureed curry or pureed mince and gravy
- pureed meat or vegetable casserole
- pureed lentils. For example, dahl.
- Potatoes and vegetables
  - pureed cooked potato or root vegetables.

### Be aware

Pureed vegetables with shells on, such as peas or sweetcorn, must be sieved after you have pureed them.

## For desserts and snacks try:

- Angel Delight
- mousse
- thick custard
- pureed semolina, rice or other milk pudding
- pureed stewed fruit and custard
- smooth fruit fools
- plain cake pureed with custard or cream
- thick smooth soup. You should only have soup of the 'thickness' that your SLT has advised is right for you. Please see the advice that they have given you.
- pureed banana
- pureed avocado
- smooth dips such as taramasalata.

# Where can I find further information or support if I need it after I have read this information?

If you have any queries or would like further advice **do** contact the Speech and Language Therapy staff in the relevant department.

## Royal Sussex County Hospital **01273 696955**

Acute Inpatients	<b>Ext. 64891</b>
Neurology and Trauma	<b>Ext. 64931</b>
Stroke	<b>Ext. 64590</b>
Head and Neck	<b>Ext. 67211</b>
Voice and ENT	<b>Ext. 64804</b>

## Princess Royal Hospital **01444 441881**

Acute Inpatients	<b>Ext. 68057</b>
Sussex Rehabilitation Centre	<b>Ext. 65770</b>

## St Richard's Hospital, Chichester **01243 831477**

Acute Inpatients and Stroke	<b>Ext. 35205</b>
Donald Wilson NRC	<b>Ext. 32205</b>

## Worthing Hospital **01903 205111**

Acute Inpatients and Stroke	<b>Ext. 85582</b>
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