

Preparing a soft and bite-sized (Level 6) diet

This leaflet gives some generic information about a Level 6 diet. Consideration must always be given to the person's allergies, medical and cultural needs as well as personal preference.

All food should meet the following criteria:




- ✓ Food is **soft, tender** and **moist throughout** with no separate thin liquid **and** can be **easily mashed with a fork**
- ✓ Food is chopped into **bite-sized pieces**
1.5cm (thumbnail size) for an adult / 8mm for a child
- ✓ Food can be **easily squashed between finger and thumb**
- ✗ **No separate thin liquid**
- ✗ **No hard pieces of food**
- ✗ **No 'High Risk Foods'** unless modified appropriately













Tips and cautions:

- **Avoid 'high risk foods'** (dry, crumbly foods; stringy, fibrous textures; foods with skins/husks; hard/crunchy foods - **see additional information sheet 'High Risk Foods'**).
- Please see separate leaflet **'Soft and bite-sized diet'** for more information on this texture.

Modifications required

Meat 	Meat should be stewed or slow cooked until soft and tender, then cut to bite sized pieces. If meat cannot be served soft, tender and bite-sized, it should be shredded or minced. Serve all meat with a thick sauce or gravy.
Stews, casseroles and curry	Stews, casseroles and curries can contain meat, fish, vegetables or meat alternatives as long as pieces are soft, tender and bite sized (no hard lumps). The liquid in stews, casseroles or curries must be thick.
Burgers and sausages	Burgers should be freshly made, chopped small and served without bread or garnish . Serve with plenty of thick sauces to moisten (e.g. ketchup, mayonnaise, houmous). Sausages should be skinless, then shredded/chopped to bitesize pieces.

<p>Fish</p> 	<p>Remove all skin and bones. Cook until soft and easily broken into small bite-sized pieces (1.5 x 1.5 cm or smaller). Serve in thick sauce. Avoid hard/crispy batter.</p>
<p>Eggs</p> 	<p>Scramble, poach or boil. Chop into bite-sized pieces (or mash) and serve with a thick sauce such as hollandaise, mayonnaise, or tomato sauce to moisten. Avoid fried eggs which can be crispy.</p>
<p>Bread</p> 	<p>Pre-gelled soaked breads can be prepared using soaking solutions. No bread unless assessed as suitable by a speech therapist. If your Speech Therapist has advised you can have bread then prepare with plenty of spread and soft, moist fillings (egg / tuna mayonnaise, cream cheese), remove crusts and present in bite-sized pieces.</p>
<p>Pastry / Pies</p> 	<p>Only use soft pastry that can be easily mashed with a fork. Add enough gravy / sauce to avoid a claggy texture. Avoid hard crusts. Pie fillings can contain meat, fish, vegetables or meat alternatives as long as pieces are soft, tender and bite sized (no hard lumps, skins or husks). Moisten with plenty of thick sauce / gravy. If needed, fillings can be minced or blended.</p>
<p>Potatoes</p> 	<p>Boiled / steamed potatoes should be chopped into small pieces and moistened with thick gravy / sauce. Mashed potatoes should be mashed with enough gravy / sauce / butter / milk until not too sticky. Remove hard edges from chips / roast potatoes and moisten with sauce.</p>
<p>Pasta</p> 	<p>Pasta should be well cooked until soft and served in thick sauce. Check that pasta shells / ravioli pieces are bite-sized or smaller. Chop spaghetti into bite-sized strips.</p>
<p>Rice</p> 	<p>Rice can be grainy and sticky. Cook well until very soft, then mash and serve in thick sauce. It should not be sticky or glutinous.</p>
<p>Cereal</p> 	<p>Opt for soft cereals (e.g. Weetabix, porridge, Ready brek). Soak in warm milk until soft and mushy. Add enough milk to avoid a sticky consistency. Mash to combine. Drain away any excess fluid. Avoid cereals that contain dried fruit.</p>
<p>Vegetables</p>	<p>Remove any skins and fibrous parts (e.g. broccoli stalks). Vegetables should be well cooked (stewed / steamed / boiled) until soft and served in bite-sized pieces. Avoid stringy vegetables (e.g. runner beans, asparagus, celery)</p>
<p>Soups</p> 	<p>Any lumps in soups should be easily mashed with a fork. Soups containing high risk foods (such as sweetcorn, asparagus, peas) may need to be blended. Soup should be no thinner than the recommended drinks consistency. Thicken with fresh soft breadcrumbs, cornflour, or thickener if needed.</p>

<p>Food with husks</p> 	<p>Avoid vegetables with skins and husks (such as sweetcorn, garden peas, kidney / butter beans and other pulses) unless well blended and then sieved. Creamed sweetcorn is a good alternative to tinned, frozen or fresh versions.</p>
<p>Fruit</p> 	<p>Ripened soft fruit (e.g. banana) or soft tinned fruit (e.g. peaches) should be chopped to bite-sized pieces. Thick smooth yoghurt or cream can be used to moisten. Hard fruits (e.g. apples) should be stewed until soft, then chopped up small or mashed. For all fruit - remove any stones, skins, pips and hard cores. Drain away any excess thin juice. Avoid dried fruit. Fruit where juice separates when chewed (e.g. watermelon) should only be given if assessed as safe by a speech therapist An easy way to have fruit is blended into a fruit smoothie or milkshake.</p>
<p>Cake, biscuits, crisps, sweets</p> 	<p>Opt for soft, light sponges. Serve with thick cream or custard. Avoid dense fruitcakes. Avoid hard biscuits, crisps and sweets as they are a choking hazard. Pre-gelled soaked biscuits can be prepared using a soaking solution. Some people can manage foods that melt in the mouth (Skips, Quavers, Wotsits, Pom Bears). This must be assessed by a speech therapist on an individual basis.</p>

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Soft & Bite-sized Diet (Level 6): Meal Ideas

Cautions:

- **All food should meet the criteria for a soft and bite sized diet:**
Food should be **soft, tender** and **moist** throughout with **no separate liquid**. It should be **easily mashed with a fork** and chopped into **bite-sized pieces (1.5cm or smaller)**. See further information sheets: 'Soft and bite-sized diet'; 'Preparing a soft and bite-sized diet'
- **Avoid high risk foods** (dry, crumbly foods; stringy, fibrous textures; foods with skins / husks; hard / crunchy foods). See information sheet: 'High Risk Foods'

Breakfast ideas

- Porridge
- Weetabix
- Soft fruits (tinned, fresh or stewed) in bite-sized pieces served with yoghurt
- Egg (scrambled, poached, boiled) in bite sized pieces
- Thick milkshakes or fruit smoothies
- Skinless sausages in bite sized pieces, with thick sauce



Dessert ideas

- Rice pudding, semolina
- Blancmange, Angel Delight
- Soft fruit (tinned, fresh or stewed) in bite size pieces, served with yoghurt, thick cream or custard
- Plain sponge cake with cream, in bite-sized pieces
- Cake bars with custard or thick cream, in bite-sized pieces
- Thick, creamy yoghurt / fromage frais
- Steamed sponge pudding in bite-sized pieces, with thick custard/cream
- **No ice cream for those requiring thickened fluids**



Main meal ideas

- Thick soup
- Skinless sausages in bite-sized pieces, with thick sauce
- Very soft chips in bite-sized pieces with thick gravy
- Tender meat casserole / curry (in bite-sized pieces)
- Cottage pie (minced meat and mashed potatoes) with thick gravy
- Steamed/poached fish in sauce, in bite-sized pieces
- Omelette (with a soft filling such as cheese) in bite-sized pieces
- Inside of a jacket potato (no skins) with soft fillings (e.g. egg / tuna mayonnaise, cream cheese)
- Well-cooked, soft pasta in sauce (e.g. macaroni cheese, ravioli), in bite-sized pieces
- Soft, well cooked vegetables (e.g. carrot, broccoli, sweet potato) in bite-sized pieces



Snack ideas

- Thick milkshakes.
- Soft fruit (tinned or fresh) in bite-sized pieces
- Smooth yoghurt or fromage frais
- Smooth guacamole, houmous, taramasalata
- Smooth fish or meat pate or mousse
- Plain cream cheese or cottage cheese
- Cake bars in bite-sized pieces with custard / thick cream

