



**Royal Surrey
County Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust

Soft Diet

Nutrition & Dietetics Department

Patient information leaflet

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for you if you:

- Have been advised to follow a soft diet
- Have difficulties swallowing food and therefore need to follow a soft diet
- Need ideas which will help you to increase your nutritional intake whilst on a soft diet

This advice is for short term use only, it is important to be referred to a Dietitian if you need to take food in a soft form for several months. A Dietitian can ensure that you are getting all the nutrition you need.

Why is nutrition important?

A soft diet may be restricting and you may find you eat less than normal. It is important to make sure you are getting enough calories from your diet to keep your weight stable. This will help you feel well.

You may need to change the balance of your diet to include more energy rich food and drinks. This means that high calorie or 'unhealthy' foods can be good for you!

Key tips

- Eat 'little and often'
- Try to include a small snack or nourishing drink between meals
- Have a dessert after meals (or as a snack)
- Use sauces, butter, gravy, cream or custard to soften foods and keep them moist
- Soften foods by chopping, mincing and mashing
- Try to make sure you chew foods well
- Take small sips of a drink to help with swallowing
- Avoid foods that need a lot of chewing or don't break down well when chewed, e.g. bread, whole meat and pastry

What foods do I need to avoid?

You may find these foods difficult to swallow:

- Bread and rolls
- Dry foods
- Stringy foods e.g. green beans, celery, bacon
- Tough skins e.g. jacket potato or tomato skins
- Crispy coatings e.g. on breaded chicken or fish
- Coarse, hard foods e.g. nuts, raw vegetables

What can I eat for breakfast?

- Porridge or Ready Brek®
- Weetabix® or 'soggy' cereal e.g. cornflakes soaked in milk
- Puréed sweetened fruit – tinned pears, stewed fruit, fruit compote
- Full fat smooth yoghurt or fromage frais
- Glass of fruit juice, milkshake or smoothie
- Omelette, scrambled or soft, boiled egg
- Skinless sausages – well chopped
- Baked beans

What can I eat for a main meal?

Meat and alternatives

- Shepherd's pie, cottage pie, corned beef hash (with extra gravy)
- Minced cooked meats with gravy or sauce
- Small pieces of tender meat e.g. casserole, stew, hotpot
- Poached fish in sauce (check for bones)
- Fish pie, fish mornay
- Tinned fish (tuna, salmon) with mayonnaise or sauce
- Scrambled egg, cheese omelette, egg mayonnaise
- Fillings from quiche and soufflés
- Cheese sauce e.g. cauliflower cheese, macaroni cheese, spaghetti carbonara
- Puréed lentils (dahl)
- Quorn or soya mince dishes with plenty of gravy

Starchy foods

- Mashed or boiled potatoes, or instant mashed potato
- Mash the inside of a jacket potato with butter and a soft filling
- Tinned spaghetti or ravioli
- Pasta with a tomato or other smooth sauce
- Rice with plenty of sauce

Vegetables

- Mashed or soft vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, parsnips
- Mushy peas, pease pudding
- Tinned tomatoes or fresh tomatoes skinned and chopped

What can I eat for dessert?

- Milk puddings e.g. custard, rice pudding, semolina, tapioca
- Sponge pudding or cake (with cream, ice cream or custard to soften)
- Blancmange, mousse, fruit fool, trifle, milk jelly, Angel Delight®, instant whip
- Stewed fruit, fruit crumble softened with cream, custard or ice cream
- Smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, egg custard
- Ice cream, sorbet

What can I eat for a snack meal?

- Bowl of creamy smooth soup
- Pasta mixed with:
 - Cheese spread or cream cheese
 - Dips e.g. sour cream, houmous, taramasalata, tzatziki, guacamole
- Tuna, salmon or egg mayonnaise
- Tinned spaghetti or ravioli
- Avocado with flaked crab meat in a cocktail sauce
- Scrambled, poached or soft boiled eggs or egg mayonnaise
- Cheese omelette

What sweet snacks can I eat between meals?

- 'Dunked' biscuits in tea or a warm milky drink
- Sponge cake with cream, custard or ice cream
- Fruit fools, mousses, instant whips or crème caramel
- Milky puddings e.g. custard, rice pudding
- Yoghurt or fromage frais
- Ice-cream, mini ice-creams, choc ices, frozen yoghurt
- Bowl of cereal e.g. Weetabix® or cornflakes soaked in milk
- Smooth chocolate bars

What savoury snacks can I eat between meals?

- Corn snacks e.g. Skips®, Wotsits®, Quavers®
- Cheese triangles
- Dips e.g. sour cream, houmous, taramasalata, smooth tzatziki and guacamole

What can I drink?

It is desirable to include at least 8-10 cups (6-8 mugs) of fluid per day to prevent dehydration. This may be a lot if you have a small appetite. Spread them evenly throughout the day and try not to drink with meals, as you may find this fills you up.

Choose nourishing drinks, such as:

- Cold milk, milkshake or yoghurt drinks
- Hot milky drinks e.g. coffee, hot chocolate, cocoa, malted milk, Ovaltine®, Horlicks®, Milo®
- Full sugar fizzy drinks or squash/cordial added to water or lemonade
- Fruit juices or smoothies
- Nesquik®, Crusha® syrup, Weetabix On-The-Go® or Complian Shakes® (flavoured or unflavoured)

What if I am losing weight?

If you notice you are losing weight, the following tips may help you:

- Ensure you are having at least 6 small meals, snacks or nourishing drinks during the day.
- Aim to have a pint of full cream milk everyday. This can be drunk as milk or used in cooking or blending foods such as porridge or cereal.
- Avoid foods labelled 'low calorie'; 'diet' or 'low fat' and choose 'full fat' options. These may be labelled as 'luxury' or 'thick and creamy'.
- 'Fortify' your meals, snacks and fluids by adding sugar, syrup, honey, jam, cream, butter, spread, cheese, yoghurt or ice cream (see table on page 8).
- A full plate of food can put you off eating. Try having your food on a smaller plate, you can always go back for more!
- Try to make the most of the time of day when your appetite is best.
- There is no need to stick to traditional mealtime foods. Breakfast cereal can make a good evening snack.
- Don't fill up on low energy foods such as fruit and vegetables.
- Try Complian® and Meritene® soups and shakes. These are available from chemists and supermarkets, and can be drunk between meals.
- Fortify your milk. This is a good way to get extra protein into your diet. Add 2-3 tablespoons of milk powder to a pint of milk and mix well. Keep refrigerated and use instead of milk in drinks and with food.

How do I add extra nutrition to my food?

You may find it difficult to eat large amounts at meals. Try to enrich food and drinks by adding extra ingredients using the table below:

Add sugar, jam, honey to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cereal or porridge• Puddings• Hot drinks, milkshakes or smoothies
Add extra fats (e.g. butter, margarine, spread, oils, mayonnaise) to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mashed potato• Pasta dishes• Sauces
Add cream, crème fraîche, full cream milk to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sauces and soups• Mashed potato or pasta dishes• Puddings and cakes• Cereal or porridge• Milkshakes or smoothies
Add grated cheese to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sauces and soups• Mashed potato or pasta dishes• Scrambled eggs or omelettes• Baked beans or tinned spaghetti
Add skimmed milk powder to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milk (see recipe on page 7)• Porridge• Mashed potato• Creamy sauces and soups• Custard and milky puddings• Milkshakes
Add cream, evaporated or condensed milk, yoghurt, crème fraîche, custard or ice cream to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Puddings and cakes• Fruit, fruit pies or crumbles• Jelly

Nourishing drink recipes

Here are a few recipes of nutritious drinks for you to try at home. Make them by placing all the ingredients together in a blender and mixing well. (NB. Some recipes contain nuts).

Tips

- Try using different fruits to vary the taste and make up your own combinations
- Use fresh, frozen or tinned fruit
- Stew or microwave fruit such as apples
- Add extra honey, sugar or syrup to sweeten
- Add extra whole milk, natural yoghurt or cream cheese to make them less sweet
- Add extra milk or fruit juice to make them thinner

Rich Banana Milkshake

- 150ml whole milk
- 50ml double cream
- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 100ml condensed milk
- 2 tablespoons smooth peanut butter
- 1 banana

Peanut and Strawberry Smoothie

- A few handfuls of strawberries
- 3 heaped tablespoons smooth peanut butter
- 1 large banana
- 200ml Greek yoghurt
- 200ml whole milk
- 50ml double cream

Very Berry Milkshake

- A few handfuls of raspberries, strawberries and blackberries
- 250ml whole milk
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 25g dark chocolate
- Few drops vanilla essence
- 20ml double cream

Fruity Shake

- Mixed fruit e.g. peeled apple, banana, strawberry or peach
- 300g Greek Yoghurt
- 1 tin of fruit in syrup e.g. peaches or pears
- 100ml smooth orange juice
- Ice cubes (optional)

Ice-cream Float

- 1 large glass lemonade, cola or cream soda
- 1 scoop vanilla ice cream

Blend together or allow ice-cream to melt.

Iced Latté

- 200ml whole milk
- 2 teaspoons coffee powder
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 scoop ice cream

Dissolve the coffee in a little hot milk. Add the remaining milk, sugar and ice cream. Whisk and chill thoroughly.

Honey and Lemon Cup

- 200ml whole milk
- 2 dessert spoons of honey
- Dash of lemon juice

Heat the milk with the honey. Remove from the heat, add the lemon juice and serve immediately.

Morning Refresher

- 300ml whole milk
- 1 heaped tablespoon milk powder
- 1 pot (150g) thick and creamy yoghurt
- 3 pineapple rings or 1 ripe banana

Energy Soup in a Cup

- 200ml whole milk
- 1 heaped tablespoon milk powder
- 1 packet of 'cuppa-soup'

Heat the milk and whisk in soup in a cup and milk powder.

Soup Swirl

- 200ml whole milk
- 1 tin condensed soup
- 20ml cream

Heat the soup and milk in a pan. Pour into a bowl and swirl in the cream.

Luxury Hot Chocolate

- 250ml whole milk
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 25g dark chocolate
- Few drops vanilla essence
- 20ml double cream

Heat the milk and sugar until the chocolate dissolves – do not boil but let the mixture get steaming hot. Reduce the heat and add the vanilla essence and double cream.

Reference sources

- Gandy J. (ed) (2014) Manual of Dietetic Practice, 5th Edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell
- British Dietetic Association Food Factsheet on Malnutrition: www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/MalnutritionFactSheet.pdf

Dietetic Department contact details

The information in this leaflet was correct at time of writing. Please note that product changes are not the responsibility of the author.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact your GP or Consultant and ask to be referred to a Registered Dietitian.

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PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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