

# Dysphagia Soft Diet

## What is a dysphagia soft diet?

A dysphagia soft diet is needed if you have trouble chewing or swallowing. This can happen for many reasons such as mouth pain, poorly-fitting dentures, or missing teeth. Children going through tooth development may also have difficulties chewing or swallowing.

On a dysphagia soft diet you may eat foods that are **soft** and **moist**. Add broth, melted butter or soft margarine, gravy, sauces, milk, or juice to your foods for extra moisture.

Foods that are not soft or moist enough may need to be diced, minced, finely shaved, or mashed.

Foods that need to be diced should be cut into pieces that are smaller than 1 cm (about ½ inch) for adults and smaller than 8 mm for children.

- Example of 1 cm of diced food: 
- Example of 8 mm of diced food (children): 

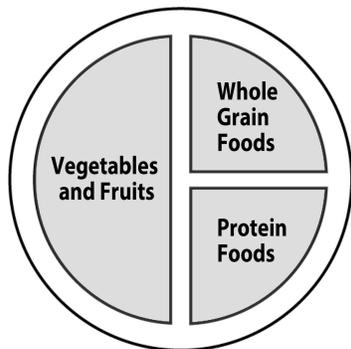
Foods that need to be minced should be less than ½ cm (about ¼ inch).

- Example of ½ cm of minced food: 

## Eating well

Canada's Food Guide recommends eating a variety of healthy foods each day. This includes:

- Having plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Choosing whole grain foods
- Eating protein foods



## Vegetables and fruits

### Foods to choose:

- soft diced cooked vegetables (carrots, squash), mashable cooked vegetables (peas, spinach) or minced cooked vegetables (broccoli, yellow or green beans)
- very finely shredded or minced salads (coleslaw, leafy greens, lettuce) with extra dressing if needed
- mashed potatoes or other well-cooked potato side dishes such as scalloped potatoes
- canned cream corn
- soft ripe mashable fruit: canned, fresh, or frozen (bananas, canned crushed pineapple, canned mandarin oranges, canned sliced peaches, ripe pears), fresh fruit with skins and membranes removed (diced soft cantaloupe, seedless watermelon) fruit cocktail without pineapple pieces or grapes
- pureed, stewed pitted prunes
- fruit smoothies

### Foods to avoid:

- hard, raw vegetables that cannot be mashed (broccoli, carrot sticks, cauliflower, celery), even if diced
- tossed salad, or any other salads made with ingredients not allowed
- salad or cabbage that is not finely shredded (Caesar, spinach, tossed)
- crispy dry French fries, hash browns, or potato skins
- whole kernel corn, even in soup
- fresh or canned vegetables or fruits, with membranes or tough skins (whole apples, citrus fruits, grapes, whole tomatoes)
- fruits with hard seeds (blackberries, raspberries)
- dried fruit (coconut, cranberries, raisins)
- pineapple, fresh or canned, sliced, chunks, or tidbits

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## Grain foods

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### Foods to choose:

- cooked cereals (cream of rice, Cream of Wheat<sup>®</sup> oat bran, oatmeal)
- cold cereals that soften in milk (bran flakes, corn flakes, rice crisps)
- soft moist bread products (biscuits, buns, buttered toast, muffins) served with butter, soft margarine, or other allowed spreads
- French toast, pancakes, or waffles, served with applesauce or syrup to moisten
- soft moist barley, couscous, quinoa, or rice in sauces, soups, or casseroles
- pasta served in sauce
- bread pudding, or soft and moist bread stuffing (without chocolate chips, coconut, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, or any other hard particles)
- soft crackers, such as soda crackers
- soft cereal bars, such as Nutri-Grain<sup>®</sup> bars
- ground flax seed or wheat bran stirred into cereals

### Foods to avoid:

- cereals or grain products (with chocolate chips, coconut, dried fruit, nuts, or seeds)
- dry, crusty, or chewy breads (bagels, crusty buns, English muffins, pitas, tortillas)
- dry, loose rice (brown, fried, steamed, wild)
- hard or chewy cereal bars, crackers, or granola
- dry pizza crust, such as thin crust pizza

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## Protein foods

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### Foods to choose:

- milk: plain or flavoured
- buttermilk, smooth milkshakes, or fortified soy beverages
- smooth yogurt or fruit yogurt with small soft pieces of fruit
- cottage cheese
- all cheeses (hard or soft), diced, sliced, or grated
- soft tofu/soy protein
- soft cooked beans, lentils, peas, or soft dishes made with allowed ingredients (soft bean salad)

- smooth nut butters mixed into allowed foods (peanut butter smoothie)
- all cooked eggs or egg substitutes including omelets and quiche, made with allowed foods
- soft moist tender meat or poultry, diced
- canned fish with bones removed (canned salmon with mashed bones is allowed)
- tender boneless fish that flakes easily
- thinly shaved soft deli meats (roast beef, turkey, ham)
- sandwiches with finely-minced salad-type fillings (egg, chicken, tuna salad, minced lettuce, or cheese) without whole lettuce or whole raw vegetables
- tender mashable meats, made with allowed ingredients (casseroles, chili, lasagna, meatloaf, meatballs, shepherd's pie, or stew)
- soft and mashable perogies, served with allowed condiments
- stir-fry made with allowed ingredients
- spaghetti sauces made with allowed ingredients
- broth or cream soups made with allowed ingredients

### Foods to avoid:

- yogurt (with large fruit pieces, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, or granola)
- crispy melted stringy cheese topping (for example, on top of casserole)
- nut butters: crunchy or smooth, spread on food
- nuts and seeds, whole or chopped
- hard fried eggs
- bacon, bacon bits, or beef jerky
- crispy or dry fish, meat, or poultry
- casseroles, chili, or stews, made with ingredients not allowed
- processed luncheon meats, sausages, or wieners with hard casings such as garlic sausage, Kolbassa, or salami
- hamburgers or wieners in a bun

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## Desserts and snacks

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### Foods to choose:

- ice cream, Popsicles<sup>®</sup>, sherbet, soy frozen desserts, or frozen yogurt
- smooth custards, milk pudding, mousse, rice pudding, or tapioca pudding
- soft, moist, or easy-to-break cookies (digestive biscuits)
- soft baked desserts (cream or pumpkin pies, moist cakes) made with allowed foods
- jellied desserts

### Foods to avoid:

- baked desserts, custards, or puddings with chocolate chips, dried fruit, nuts, or seeds
- crispy or hard dry desserts and snacks
- chips, nachos, popcorn, or pretzels
- hard candy, gum, licorice, or toffee

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## Condiments and sauces

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### Foods to choose:

- butter, soft margarine, mayonnaise, salad dressings, or sour cream
- condiments that are smooth, or have small pieces such as BBQ sauce, horseradish, ketchup, mustard, or relish
- finely ground herbs, seasonings, and spices, without hard seeds
- gravies or sauces that are smooth such as cheese sauce, hollandaise sauce, or white sauce
- soft, mashable jam and jelly, without seeds or hard pieces
- sugar, syrup, or sugar substitutes

Sticky foods, such as cream cheese, cheese spread, and honey are allowed if mixed into cooking or thinly spread on allowed foods. These foods are **not** to be eaten alone.

### Foods to avoid:

- condiments with larger pieces (chutney, cranberry sauce, salsa with corn)
- herbs, spices, and seasonings with hard seeds (coriander seeds, peppercorns)
- jams or marmalades with fruit pieces larger than about 1 cm (½ inch)
- olives or pickles, whole, sliced, or cut

## Making diced food

Some foods, such as meat, poultry, or fruit need to be diced to be a safe texture. Other foods such as canned meat or salmon need to be mashed to be a safe texture. Foods can be chopped or mashed with a knife, pastry blender, potato masher, or fork.

Foods that need to be diced should be cut into pieces that are smaller than 1 cm (about ½ inch).



### Vegetables and fruits

- Drain foods before dicing.
- Cut into small pieces about 1 cm (½ inch) cubes or
- Chop or mash until you have small even-size pieces.

### Meat

- Cut into small pieces about 1 cm (½ inch) cubes or
- Finely shave the meat with a meat slicer or knife so that it looks like thinly sliced deli meat.

## Making minced food

Some foods may be soft enough to mince with a fork, pastry blender, or potato masher.

Minced food should be less than ½ cm (about ¼ inch).



You can mince harder food with a blender, mini chopper, or food processor.



Ask your dietitian or swallowing team for more information if needed.

## Mixed consistency foods

A food with mixed consistency has both thin fluid and solid foods together in one bite.

You may not be able to eat foods with a mixed consistency (in one mouthful) or may have been **told by your healthcare provider** not to eat foods with a mixed consistency.

### Foods to avoid:

- canned fruit in liquid
- cold cereal with milk
- crackers in soup
- juicy fresh vegetables and fruits, such as grapes, oranges, tomatoes, and watermelon (when chewed, these release water, which is a thin fluid)
- fruit in jellied desserts
- ice cream and other frozen desserts with candy, dried fruit, nuts, or other hard pieces
- soups with pieces of solid food such as grains, meat, pasta, or vegetables
- stewed fruit
- whole, diced, mashed, stewed, or baked tomatoes, whole cherry tomatoes
- more than 1 oz (30 mL) of gravy pooling around the food.

### Tips:

- Eat smooth cooked cereal, instead of cold cereal with milk.
- Blend or strain soups until smooth. Some soups may need to be thickened to the right consistency. Follow the directions given by your swallowing team.
- Don't add crackers or bread to your soup.
- Gravy or sauces may need to be thickened.

### Try not to take pills with thin fluids.

Instead, take pills with applesauce, pudding, or yogurt.

If you take fluid medicines, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or your healthcare team about how to take them safely.