

## Mechanical Soft Diet

### What is a mechanical soft diet?

This diet is designed for people who have trouble chewing and swallowing. Chopped, ground and pureed foods are included in this diet, as well as foods that break apart without a knife.

### Why is this diet safer for me?

The foods in this diet are easy to eat and do not need a lot of chewing to swallow safely. This diet is helpful if you are missing teeth or have just had surgery and cannot chew hard foods. This diet does include soft breads and rice, so it is important that you can move food in your mouth and can swallow safely.

### Milk Products: Foods to Choose

- Smooth or fruited yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- Soft sliced cheese

### Milk Products: Foods to Avoid

- Hard cheese cubes and slices
- Yogurt with nuts or granola

### Meat and Protein: Foods to Choose

- Ground cooked meat and poultry
- Baked, poached or broiled fish
- Casseroles with ground or 1/4 inch diced meat
- Eggs
- Cottage cheese
- Sandwich with soft bread
- Shaved deli turkey or ham
- Tuna salad or egg salad without celery or raw vegetables
- Tofu
- Well cooked, moistened and mashed dried beans, peas and legumes
- Diced meatloaf and meatballs

### Meat and Protein: Foods to Avoid

- Thick cold cuts
- Sausage, wieners, hamburgers
- Large chunks of cheese
- Casseroles with large chunks of meat
- Entire pieces of meat
- Fried fish
- Peanut butter
- Chili with beans
- Crisp fried eggs

### Vegetables: Foods to Choose

- Soft cooked vegetables that can easily be mashed with a fork
- Legumes, potatoes without skins, and squash
- Minced 1/8 or diced 1/4 inch vegetables (you may find that some do not mince well)

### Vegetables: Foods to Avoid

- Corn
- Asparagus
- Raw vegetables
- Stir fried or lightly cooked vegetables that are still crunchy
- Fried vegetables
- Crispy French fries, crispy hash browns or fried potato skins

### Fruits: Foods to Choose

- Applesauce or other pureed fruit
- Drained canned fruits (unless you are allowed thin liquids)
- Soft, fresh fruits such as peaches, nectarines without skin, melon, and bananas
- Cooked fruit, mashed or diced

**Fruits: Foods to Avoid**

- Canned fruit **with** juice or syrup unless allowed to drink thin liquids
- Fruit with skins and seeds
- Pineapple
- Dried fruits

**Breads, Cereals, and Starches: Foods to Choose**

- Cream of Wheat<sup>®</sup>, Cream of Rice<sup>®</sup>, oatmeal, Malt-o-Meal<sup>®</sup>, or Co-Co Wheats<sup>®</sup>
- Soft pancakes, soft French toast moistened with syrup or sauce
- Soft pasta, spätzle or dumplings with sauce, butter or gravy
- Moist white rice
- Soft breads, rolls, or muffins
- Plain cold cereal softened with milk

**Breads, Cereals, and Starches: Foods to Avoid**

- Brown or wild rice
- Cold coarse cereals with whole grains, dry fruit or nuts
- Dry coarse breads with pieces of grain, nuts or seeds
- Coarse hard crackers such as Rye Crisp or Melba toast
- Hard taco shells
- Popcorn, chips
- Chow mein noodles

**Soup: Foods to Choose**

- Any cream soups or broth soups without large chunks of food
- Plain broth

**Soup: Foods to Avoid**

Soups with stringy meats, hard vegetables or other firm pieces of food.

**Desserts: Foods to Choose**

- Custards or pudding
- Rice or bread pudding without dried fruit
- Gelatin
- Sherbet/sorbet, ice cream and popsicles if thin liquids are allowed
- Cakes and pies without nuts
- Soft cookies without dried fruit or nuts
- Chocolate candy without nuts

**Desserts: Foods to Avoid**

- Desserts with nuts, seeds, coconut or dried fruit
- Candy with nuts
- Hard or chewy candy or cookies (taffy, caramel, licorice)
- Granola bars

**Drinks: Foods to Choose**

All drinks

**Drinks: Foods to Avoid**

None, unless you have been told to thicken your liquids. Then see Health Facts for You #468.

**Other: Foods to Choose**

- Butter, margarine, oils, vegetable shortening
- Salad dressings, mayo
- Vinegar
- Gravies
- Salt and pepper
- Ketchup, mustard, bbq sauce
- Jelly or preserves (without tough fruit skins)
- Sugar, honey, molasses or syrup
- Horseradish
- Chili sauce
- Tomato, alfredo or cheese sauce
- Cream cheese or spreads with soft fruits and vegetables
- Whipped topping

### Other: Foods to Avoid

- Olives
- Jam or jelly with seeds
- Salsa with large pieces of vegetables

### How to Prepare Diced Meat and Vegetables

All food must be in pieces that are no larger than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.

1. Cut meat or veggies into strips that are  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch or less.
2. Turn and cut every  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch or less. You will want to be sure that all cubes are smaller than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.



### Tips

- Use tools, such as a blender, food processor, food chopper, grinder, or potato masher to prepare foods for this diet.
- Use gravies, sauces, vegetable or fruit juice, milk, half-and-half or water from cooking to moisten foods when blending, chopping, grinding, or mashing them.
- Serve foods with gravies or sauces to moisten them and to add flavor.
- Serve soft, moist casseroles and fish, meat, or egg salads without large chunks of meat or vegetables.
- Serve soups with small pieces of easy to chew and easy to swallow meats and vegetables.

- Cover bread products such as pancakes or bread slices with sauce, gravy, or syrup, then mix the two items until the bread product begins to dissolve into a slurry.
- Add dry milk powder to foods to increase the calories and protein in this diet.
- Prepare favorite food items and freeze them in portion sizes for use later.
- Reheat foods with care so that a tough outer crust does not form on them.
- Avoid sticky foods such as peanut butter, and chewy candies such as caramel, toffee, and licorice.
- Vegetables should be cooked tender enough to be easily mashed with a fork.

### How can I increase my calories without a lot of chewing?

Add nutritional supplements such as Ensure<sup>®</sup>, BOOST<sup>®</sup>, or Carnation Breakfast Essentials<sup>®</sup> to your diet. Most people on this diet are happy to find out that desserts are a fun way to increase calories. In the morning, you can fix what you might want to call “Super Duper Cereal.” You can make it based on what tastes you like.

### Super Duper Cereal

1 package of plain instant oatmeal  
4 ounces of high protein nutrition supplement such as Boost High Protein<sup>®</sup>, Ensure High Protein<sup>®</sup>, or similar product.  
You pick the flavor.  
Nutmeg or cinnamon

Empty instant oats into a microwave safe bowl. Add supplement. Microwave uncovered for 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  -2 minutes or until thickened. Use potholders to remove. Sprinkle with nutmeg or cinnamon. Serve with milk or cream as desired. Each serving

will provide 212 calories and 20.5 grams of protein.

### **Butterscotch Oatmeal**

1 egg, beaten  
1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups milk  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup packed dark brown sugar  
1 cup quick cooking oats or blended rolled oats  
2 tablespoons butter

In a saucepan over medium heat, whisk together the egg, milk, and brown sugar. Mix in the oats. When the oatmeal begins to boil, cook and stir until thick. Remove from the heat. Stir in the butter until melted. Makes two servings. Each serving will provide 497 calories and 16.4 grams of protein.

### **Who to Call**

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at the phone number listed below. You can also visit our website at [www.uwhealth.org/nutrition](http://www.uwhealth.org/nutrition).

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 2/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#363