

## What is an easy to chew diet?

An easy to chew diet has foods that are soft and easy to chew. It includes many regular foods. Your child cannot eat foods that are hard, sticky, tough or crunchy.

## Why does my child need it?

Children who have trouble chewing or swallowing hard or tough foods often need a soft diet. It can help:

- Decrease the risk of food going into your child's windpipe (trachea). This helps prevent your child from choking.
- Your child easily and safely eat so they are able to:
  - Chew food well.
  - Move food easily from their tongue to their teeth.

## How do I prepare easy to chew foods?

- Many foods we eat are already in the form that your child can eat. This includes baked fish, French fries and soft breads.
- Cut all of your child's foods into bite-sized pieces.

## What foods and drinks can my child have?

Some foods and drinks that your child may and may not have are listed in the chart. Please talk with your child's feeding therapist for food suggestions based on your family's dietary needs and culture. Your child's feeding therapist or doctor can give you information about your child's special needs.

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
<b>Milk and other drinks</b>	If your child may have liquids, they must be the thickness advised by your feeding therapist or doctor. It might be one of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thin</li><li>• Slightly thick</li><li>• Mildly thick</li><li>• Moderately thick</li></ul>	Follow instructions from your child's feeding therapist or doctor
<b>Meats and meat substitutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soft meats that are cut into small pieces, no larger than one-quarter (1/4) inch.</li><li>• Most deli meats, tender chicken or fish</li><li>• Moist meatloaf</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tough meats (steak, pepperoni or salami)</li><li>• Fried meat or fish</li><li>• Peanut butter</li></ul>

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Easy to chew diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
<b>Meats and meat substitutes (continued)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moist hamburger with soft bun</li> <li>• Chicken, egg or tuna salad without added raw vegetables</li> <li>• Sloppy Joe sandwich</li> <li>• Poached, scrambled or soft-cooked eggs</li> <li>• Tofu</li> <li>• Well-cooked, moistened and mashed dried beans, peas and other legumes</li> <li>• Baked beans</li> <li>• Cheese slices</li> <li>• Soft, moist lasagna</li> <li>• Tuna-noodle casserole</li> <li>• Soft tacos</li> <li>• Soft quesadillas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot dogs</li> <li>• Bacon</li> <li>• Hard shell tacos</li> </ul>
<b>Breads and cereals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot cereals, such as oatmeal, Cream of Wheat and grits</li> <li>• Pancakes and French toast</li> <li>• Slightly moistened dry cereals with little texture, such as corn flakes and puffed rice</li> <li>• Soft breads and rolls</li> <li>• Moist muffins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breads, crackers or muffins that have dried fruit, nuts or seeds</li> <li>• Bagels</li> <li>• English muffins</li> <li>• French bread</li> </ul>
<b>Starches and potatoes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-cooked pasta in sauce</li> <li>• Casseroles</li> <li>• Well-cooked, moistened boiled, baked or mashed potatoes</li> <li>• Macaroni and cheese</li> <li>• Soft French fries with ketchup</li> <li>• Rice with gravy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry or crunchy rice</li> <li>• Potato chips</li> <li>• Granola</li> <li>• Potato skins</li> </ul>
<b>Fruits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft fruits like bananas and strawberries</li> <li>• Applesauce</li> <li>• Baked apples without skin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dried fruits</li> <li>• Apples</li> <li>• Grapes</li> <li>• Raisins</li> <li>• Fresh, canned or cooked pineapple</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooked vegetables without seeds or skins, chopped into small pieces</li> <li>• Shredded lettuce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw, crunchy vegetables</li> <li>• Corn</li> <li>• Salads</li> </ul>

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## Easy to chew diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
<b>Soups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cream and broth based soups. Soup liquid must be the thickness advised by your feeding therapist or doctor – thin, slightly thick, mildly thick or moderately thick.</li><li>• Chili</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soups with tough meats</li></ul>
<b>Desserts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pudding (banana, vanilla or chocolate)</li><li>• Custard</li><li>• Soufflé</li><li>• Cheesecake</li><li>• Soft cookies dunked in milk</li><li>• Moist cakes</li><li>• Yogurt with or without chunks of fruit</li><li>• Pies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard or very chewy cookies</li><li>• Dry, coarse cakes</li><li>• Anything with nuts, seeds, coconut, pineapple or dried fruits</li><li>• Candy</li><li>• Chewing gum</li><li>• The following items are thin liquids. Your child may not have them if they are not allowed to have thin liquids:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Frozen malts</li><li>– Milkshakes</li><li>– Frozen yogurt</li><li>– Ice cream</li><li>– Jell-O</li><li>– Any other foods that get watery at room temperature</li></ul></li></ul>

### What else do I need to know?

- Use gravies or sauces to add flavor and increase moisture of foods.
- Thicken all liquids as advised by your child's feeding therapist or doctor.
- Follow all other advice given by your child's feeding therapist or doctor.

### Who should I call if I have questions about my child's diet?

Call your child's feeding therapist or doctor if you have any questions.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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