

Standard Guidance for Food and Liquid Textures for Individuals Requiring Modified Texture Diets

Doctors or other clinicians often prescribe a modified texture diet for individuals who have difficulty swallowing (“dysphagia”) or problems preparing their food for swallowing. Dietary modifications are critical to ensure that individuals with eating difficulties get adequate nutrition, calories and fluids and to prevent foods or liquids from leaking into airways leading to choking, respiratory infections, and pneumonia.

There can be much variation in terms used to describe similar food textures when prescribing modified texture diets. What one prescriber considers “chopped” another may consider “ground.” Pureed does not mean the same thing to everyone. Below is a standard guide to food and liquid consistencies that should be used to provide consistent terminology and descriptions of major diet categories for individuals who require a modified texture diet. The descriptions and examples are adapted from the National Dysphagia Diet published by the American Dietetic Association (2002). The information is intended to standardize communication for direct care professionals who work with individuals in facilities, community placements, and programs and for those responsible for menu preparation or food preparation. However, individual assessments by appropriate clinicians are essential to ensure that any dietary modifications are tailored to meet each individual’s needs.

Soft Chopped Diet

A Soft Chopped diet is food cut by hand into even “bite size” pieces or as prescribed by a doctor.

Food must be moist throughout and cannot include any food that is hard, sticky or crunchy.



Food Group	<u>ALLOWED</u>	<u>NOT ALLOWED</u>
Meats/meat substitute	Thin-sliced, tender or ground meats and poultry; wet or moistened fish; eggs; yogurt with no nuts or coconut; casseroles with tender small chunks or ground meats.	<u>NO</u> tough, dry or rubbery meats and poultry; no dry fish or fish with bones; no chunky peanut butter; no yogurt with nuts or coconut.
Vegetables	Cooked, soft or tender vegetables; raw shredded lettuce; soft fried or mashed potatoes.	<u>NO</u> raw vegetables other than lettuce; no cooked corn kernels; non-tender or rubbery cooked vegetables; tough, crisp-fried potatoes; tough potato skins.
Fruits	Canned and cooked fruits; soft, peeled fresh fruits like peaches, cantaloupe, and watermelon <u>with seeds removed</u> ; strawberries and soft berries with small seeds	<u>NO</u> fresh fruits that are difficult to chew, like apples or pears or those with chewy peels like grapes; no stringy, high-pulp fruits such as papaya, pineapple, or mango; no uncooked dried fruits like prunes and apricots; no fruit rollups, fruit snacks, or any other dried fruits like raisins
Grains/Breads	Well-moistened breads, biscuits, muffins, pancakes, and waffles; all well-moistened cereals; rice, wild rice; moist bread dressing	<u>NO</u> dry breads, toast, or tough, crusty breads; coarse or dry cereals such as shredded wheat; dry bread dressing; dry loose rice kernels
Desserts	Most desserts except those on the “Not Allowed” list	<u>NO</u> dry cakes, cookies that are chewy, crunchy or very dry; no dessert with nuts, seeds, dry fruits, coconut, or pineapple in it; no chewy candies and candies with nuts, seeds, or coconut
Miscellaneous or Extras	All seasonings, sweeteners, sauces; jams, jellies, honey and preserves; non-chewy candies without nuts, seeds, or coconut	<u>NO</u> foods containing nuts, seeds, or coconut; no chewy caramel or taffy-type candies

Ground Diet

A Ground diet is food that is moist, soft-textured, and easily formed into a rounded ball in the mouth (bolus). Meats are ground or minced into pieces no larger than a quarter inch; all pieces are moist, and stick together slightly (cohesive).*

* A small amount of starch such as potato or pasta added to ground foods will help to make the food stick together slightly. Ground food is moist throughout but is not drippy.



Food Group	<u>ALLOWED</u>	<u>NOT ALLOWED</u>
Meats/meat substitute	Soft moistened ground or minced meat, poultry, or fish with gravy or sauce; macaroni and cheese; pasta with meat sauce; soft, moist lasagna; casseroles without rice; moist meatballs and meat loaf; moist protein salads such as tuna or egg with no large chunks, celery, or onion; cottage cheese, smooth quiche with no large chunks; poached, scrambled, or soft cooked eggs that are moist and can be mashed	NO dry meats, tough or rubbery meats such as bacon, sausage, or hot dogs; no dry casseroles or casseroles with rice or large chunks; no cheese slices or cubes; peanut butter; hard-cooked eggs; no sandwiches or pizza
Vegetables	Soft-cooked, easily- mashed vegetables that are less than ½ inch in size; well cooked, slightly mashed baked beans; well-cooked and moistened, boiled, baked or mashed potatoes	NO cooked vegetables that are not easily mashed like corn; peas; cabbage; brussel sprouts; asparagus; or other stringy, tough or rubbery cooked vegetable; no potato skins; chips; French fries
Fruits	Soft drained canned or cooked fruits without seeds or skin, soft banana that can be easily mashed	NO frozen or fresh fruits (other than soft bananas); no cooked fruit with skin or seeds; no dried fruits; no fresh, canned, or cooked pineapple
Grains and Breads	Soft pancakes well-moistened with syrup or sauce; bread that is thoroughly moistened with a water-gelatin mixture or a similar food mix (slurry); cooked cereals with very little grain or texture like oatmeal; slightly moistened dry cereals with little texture such as corn flakes or Rice Krispies; moist soft cooked noodles, pasta or rice ground in a blender or food processor.	NO regular bread (unless the individual has been evaluated and approved for this); no cereal with nuts, seeds, dried fruit and/or coconut; no whole grain dry or coarse cereals such as shredded wheat, bran flakes, and grape nuts
Desserts	pudding; custards; soft fruit pies with soft bottom crust only; crisps and cobblers without seeds or nuts and with soft breading or crumb mixture/topping; soft, moist cakes with icing; soft moist cookies that have been soaked or dunked in milk, coffee, or another liquid	NO dry, coarse cakes and cookies; pies with hard crisp crusts (bottom and/or top); nothing with nuts, seeds, cocoanut, pineapple or dried fruit; rice or bread pudding
Extras	Jams and preserves without seeds; jelly; sauces, salsas, etc. that may have small soft chunks less than 1/2 inch; soft smooth chocolate bars easily chewed—no nuts, seeds or coconut.	NO seeds, nuts, coconut, sticky foods; chewy candies such as caramel, taffy and licorice

Pureed Diet

A Pureed diet is food with a very smooth consistency or foods that have been well processed in a food processor or blender to a very smooth consistency or texture. No solid pieces or parts can be noticed in the food.




Pureed food has no lumps and feels very soft and smooth in the mouth.



Food Group	<u>ALLOWED</u>	<u>NOT ALLOWED</u>
Meats or meat substitutes	Pureed meats, soufflés that are smooth, hummus, pureed bean spreads; pureed cottage cheese; smoothly pureed casseroles with no lumps	<u>NO</u> cheese, peanut butter; no fried, scrambled or hard-cooked eggs unless pureed in a food processor or blender; no meat or fish that does not puree to smooth consistency; no coarse sausages
Vegetables	Pureed vegetables with no chunks, lumps, pulp, or seeds; tomato paste or sauce without seeds; mashed potatoes or pureed potatoes with gravy; well-cooked pasta or noodles that have been pureed to a smooth consistency	<u>NO</u> fresh or uncooked vegetables including frozen or canned corn, celery, onions, peppers, lettuce, cabbage, cucumbers, peas, sliced tomatoes; no non-pureed or non-smooth cooked vegetables
Fruits	Pureed canned fruits; soft cooked fruit that has been pureed <u>Fruit juices only if the individual can have thin liquids</u>	<u>NO</u> fresh fruits; no frozen or canned grapefruit, or pineapple
Grains and Bread	Pureed bread mixes, gelatin/water mixture or other pureed food (slurry) poured over the bread to make it smooth and easy to swallow without chewing, farina-type cooked cereals that are pureed or smooth as farina	<u>NO</u> non-smooth grain products ; no cereal with grainy/chunky texture like oatmeal; grits; barley; wheat germ; fried or wild rice; dry cereal; muffins or bread with fruits, seeds, or nuts; garlic or cheese bread; no rolls; crackers; biscuits; waffles; French toast or other similar foods.
Desserts	Smooth pudding; custards; smooth yogurt; desserts that are pureed in a blender or food processor with no seeds or nuts or other hard pieces; smooth soufflés. Note: Ice cream, sherbet and frozen yogurt are permitted only for individuals who are allowed to have thin liquids (check with the doctor).	<u>NO</u> ices; gelatins; frozen juice bars; cookies; cakes; pies, pastry; coarse or textured puddings, no bread, rice or tapioca puddings; no yogurt with fruit. Note: If an individual is not allowed to have thin liquids, then the individual may not have ice cream, frozen yogurt, or sherbet (check with the doctor).
Extras	Sugar, artificial sweetener, salt, finely ground pepper and spices; ketchup, mustard, BBQ sauce and other smooth sauces, honey, smooth jellies,	<u>NO</u> soft cheese spreads containing chunks or pieces, trail mix, dehydrated foods, nuts, chips, coconut, seeds, popcorn, pretzels, raisins, chips, pop tarts, Danish pastry, jelly or cream filled doughnuts or cakes, candy, gum, pickle relish, olives, capers, seedy jams, coarsely ground pepper and herbs

LIQUID CONSISTENCIES

When modified **liquid food texture** is prescribed the food texture should not be thinner than the prescribed liquid consistency.

Consistency	Description	Example
Thin	Includes <u>all liquids</u> , Italian ice, and ice cream without nuts, chocolate chips or solid pieces. This consistency is considered <u>non-restrictive</u> .	<i>Liquids and beverages are served without change.</i>
Nectar	Apricot or tomato juice consistency; some liquids will require a thickening agent to reach this consistency. <i>Food runs freely off the spoon but leaves a thin coating on the spoon.</i>	
Honey	Liquids can be poured but are very slow. Liquids will require a thickening agent to reach this consistency. <i>Food slowly drips in dollops (or blobs) off of the end of the spoon.</i>	
Pudding	Liquids are spoonable but when a spoon is placed upright, it will not stay upright. Liquids will require a thickening agent to reach this consistency. <i>Food sits on the spoon and does not flow off of it.</i>	

Note about thickening agents:

Commercial thickening agents are usually available in canisters or individual packets and require a physician's order. There are two types:

- Starch-based thickeners such as Thick-It, Thick and Easy, and Thicken Up; and
- Gum-based thickeners such as Thicken Up Clear, Simplythick, AquaCareH2O, and Thik & Clear.

Commercial thickeners specify the amount of the thickening product to use to reach the desired consistency. ***Follow the directions carefully to ensure the correct consistency.*** Both starch-based and gum-based thickening agents whether they are commercial or non-commercial food items (such as instant potatoes, baby fruits, baby cereal etc.) add extra calories to the foods or liquids they are added to. If the individual is on a calorie-controlled diet, these calories must be considered.