

Understanding Mechanical Soft Diets

What Is a Mechanical Soft Diet?

Mechanically altered diets consist of foods that can be safely and successfully swallowed. Foods are mechanically altered by whipping, blending, grinding, chopping, or mashing so that they are easy to chew and swallow. Mechanically altered diets are described by the National Dysphagia Diet Guidelines and are on a level system. The following describes the different levels of diet that one might need.

Level 1

The Level 1 diet consists of pureed, consistent, and unified foods. There should be no chunks or mixed textures. The food should be “pudding-like” and should not need to be chewed or be difficult to move with the tongue.

Examples: Smooth puddings, custards, yogurt, oatmeal, pureed fruits, and pureed meats



Level 2

The Level 2 diet consists of foods that are moist, soft-texture, and easily swallowed. Meats are ground or finely cut to equal sizes no bigger than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. All pureed foods from Level 1 are also okay to eat.

Examples: Soft-pancakes well moistened with syrup, soft canned fruits, soft cookies dipped in milk, soft meats like fish, moist macaroni, and scrambled eggs



Level 3

The Level 3 diet includes food that is nearly normal excluding very hard, sticky, or crunchy foods. Foods should not be overly dry and should still be moist and bite sized. Avoid dry bread, foods with nuts, seeds, fruits that are difficult to chew such as apples and dry meats.

Examples: Meatloaf, pasta, shredded cheese and cheese slices, ripe bananas, and chicken, egg or tuna salad sandwiches

Dysphagia is the medical term used to describe difficulty swallowing