

Dysphagia diets for children who have trouble swallowing



What is a dysphagia diet?

Dysphagia means trouble eating or swallowing. A dysphagia diet has foods or liquids that have a certain texture or consistency. There are 3 different types of dysphagia diets:

- Pureed
- Ground
- Mechanical soft

Your child's feeding therapist or doctor will talk with you about which of these diets your child needs. The diets are based on national standards.

Why does my child need it?

Children who have trouble chewing or swallowing often need a dysphagia 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 eat more easily and safely.

What are the types of dysphagia diets?

Some information about these diets is listed in the chart on pages 1 and 2. Your child's feeding therapist or doctor can give you specific information about your child's special needs.

Diet	What it is	Skills your child needs	Types of foods
Pureed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blended or pureed foods only	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to open mouth• Able to move tongue front and back to swallow blended food	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oatmeal• Applesauce• Pudding
Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moist, soft foods• All foods must be very easy to chew or mash with the tongue or a fork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to open mouth• Able to chew food 2 to 3 times OR mash food with their tongue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ground turkey with gravy• Tuna noodle casserole• Soft, cooked carrots that can be mashed with a fork

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

Dysphagia diets, continued

Diet	What it is	Skills your child needs	Types of foods
Mechanical soft	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foods that are soft and easy to chew• Does not include foods that are hard, tough, sticky or crunchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to open mouth• Able to move food from side-to-side in their mouth• Able to chew several times during each bite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pizza with soft crust• French toast sticks• Macaroni and cheese• Moist muffins
Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to open mouth• Able to move food from side-to-side in their mouth• Able to chew many times during each bite if needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fried chicken• Steak• Granola bars• Peanut butter

What else do I need to know?

- Your child’s feeding therapist or doctor may also advise a training diet for your child.
 - This is a mix of more than 1 diet.
 - If your child needs a training diet, your feeding therapist will give you more instructions.
- Follow all other advice given by your child’s feeding therapist or doctor.
- Your feeding therapist or doctor will let you know when your child’s diet changes.

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.

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