

## What is a mechanical soft diet?

A mechanical soft 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 eat more easily and safely so they are able to:
  - Chew food well.
  - Move food easily from their tongue to their teeth.

## How do I prepare mechanical soft foods?

- Many foods we eat are already in a 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 be allowed to have are listed in the chart on pages 1 to 3. Your child's feeding therapist or doctor can give you specific information about your child's special needs.

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
<b>Milk and other drinks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If your child may have liquids:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– They must be the thickness advised by your feeding therapist or doctor – thin, nectar or honey.</li><li>– Your child's feeding therapist or doctor can advise you.</li></ul></li></ul>	As advised by 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 in small pieces no larger than one-quarter (1/4) inch</li><li>• Most deli meats, tender chicken or fish</li><li>• Moist meatloaf</li><li>• Moist hamburger with bun</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><li>• Hot dogs</li><li>• Bacon</li></ul>

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

# Mechanical soft diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
<b>Meats and meat substitutes (continued)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chicken, egg or tuna salad without added raw vegetables</li> <li>• Sloppy Joe sandwich</li> <li>• Moist meatballs</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>• Mashed baked beans</li> <li>• Cheese slices and cubes</li> <li>• Soft, moist lasagna</li> <li>• Tuna-noodle casserole</li> <li>• Burritos</li> <li>• Soft tacos</li> <li>• Enchiladas</li> <li>• Soft quesadillas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard shell tacos</li> </ul>
<b>Breads and cereals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 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, wheat flakes and puffed rice</li> <li>• Soft breads and rolls</li> <li>• Moist doughnuts</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 like Spaghetti-o's</li> <li>• Casseroles</li> <li>• Well-cooked, moistened boiled, baked or mashed potatoes</li> <li>• Macaroni and cheese</li> <li>• 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 ripe peaches</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>

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# Mechanical soft diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
<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>
<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, nectar or honey.</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>– Milk shakes</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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