

What to Eat and Drink When You Need a Soft Diet

It is important to eat well during your treatment. A sore mouth or throat and difficulty swallowing can stop you from eating well. Liquids and soft, moist foods may be easier for you to eat and drink.

What you can do to help yourself:

- Eat or drink every 2 to 3 hours throughout the day.
- Eat foods that are soft and moist (see the chart below).
- Rinse your mouth (rinse, swish and spit) after you brush your teeth or take out your dentures. You can also do this as needed if your mouth is dry or uncomfortable. To make a mouth rinse use 1 tsp (5 ml) salt and 1 tsp (5 ml) baking soda in 4 cups (1 litre) of water. Store this mouth rinse in a covered container. Discard the remaining mouth wash after 24 hours.
- Do not eat foods or drink liquids that may irritate your mouth and throat such as:
 - Acidic foods and citrus fruits and juices (examples: tomatoes, orange juice, and pineapple)
 - Spicy foods (examples: chili, garlic, curry, jalapeno pepper)
 - Salty foods (examples: ham, bacon, canned soups)
 - Foods with a dry or rough texture (examples: crackers, granola bars, nuts)
 - Very hot foods and liquids
 - Very cold foods and liquids
 - Alcohol

Soft Food Choices

Food groups	Food choices
Grains	• Pancakes with syrup • French toast with syrup • Crepes with syrup, whipped cream or Greek yogurt on top • Pasta dishes with sauce using small pasta choices • Soft cereal bars • Cold cereal soaked in milk • Hot cereal (examples: oat bran, cream of wheat, cornmeal, oatmeal and congee) • Rice cereals thinned with milk • Potatoes without skin (examples: mashed, scalloped, baked or boiled potatoes well moistened with butter, margarine, gravy, sour cream)
Milk and milk alternatives	• Yogurt, kefir • Cottage cheese, ricotta cheese, goat cheese, laughing cow cheese, cream cheese, melted cheese
Meat and meat alternatives	• Legumes (examples: lentils, black beans and chickpeas) • Canned meat (tuna, salmon, chicken, flakes of turkey)

Food groups	Food choices
	• Ground meat (pork, lamb, chicken, turkey, beef) with gravy or sauce • Puree or strained meats • Creamed salmon • Poached fish • Fish cooked in a sauce • Tofu • Eggs (examples: scrambled, boiled with butter/margarine, poached)
Fruits and Vegetables	• Fruit or vegetable puree pouches • Canned fruit and vegetables • Skinless and seedless soft fruit (eg. Melon, avocado, banana, mango, ripe peaches and pears) • Stewed fruit • Soft well cooked vegetables • Mashed or creamed vegetables
Lunch or dinner choices	• Baked beans • Soft and moist dishes (examples: casseroles, stews, chili, chicken a la king, meatloaf, shepherd's pie, pot pies) made with minced ingredients in sauces or gravies • Chunky strained or blended soup, borscht, cream soups or chowders • Polenta • Sandwiches without crust and moist salad filling (examples. egg, fish or chicken salad). Add butter to bread. • Buttered bread without crust with any of these options on top (examples: Pate, hummus, guacamole, cream cheese, tzatziki) • Quiche or soufflé
Dessert choices	• Cookies dunked in milk • Soft moist cookies without nuts or chocolate chips • Cream pies, cheesecake without hard crust • Soft moist cake, sponge cake with custard sauce • Puddings and custards (tapioca, rice, bread) • Flavoured dessert tofu • Ice cream, sherbet, gelato frozen yogurt • Popsicles, ice cream bars, frozen yogurt bars • Jell-O • Mousse • Moist muffins, add butter/margarine, jam or jelly • Canned pie filling • Plain chocolate bar

Ask to talk to a registered dietitian in the cancer centre if you are not able to eat or you are losing weight.

Recipes

Super Pudding Recipe (4 servings)

- 1 package (4 ½ oz.) instant pudding mix
- 2 cups (500 mL) whole milk
- 2 Tablespoons (30 mL) cooking oil (corn, sunflower)
- ¾ cup (180 ml) skim milk powder

Mix well and refrigerate until set. Each serving has 300 calories and 9 grams of protein.

Super Mashed Potatoes (5 servings)

- 2 to 3 pounds of potatoes
- 1 ¼ cup (230 mL) skim milk powder
- ½ cup (125 mL) whole milk
- 3 tablespoons (45 mL) of cream
- 4 teaspoons (20 mL) of margarine

Peel and cook potatoes until done. Mix cream, milk and skim milk powder together. Add cream mixture and margarine to potatoes. Mash. Each serving has 160 calories and 8.5 grams of protein.

Avocado Egg Salad

- 4 boiled eggs peeled
- 1 ripe avocado peeled and pitted
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) lemon or lime juice. You may choose to add more.
- ½ of a teaspoon (5 mL) garlic powder. You may choose to add more.
- 3 tablespoons (45 mL) of finely chopped chives
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

- Chop the eggs into smaller pieces. Set aside.
- Put the avocado in a bowl and mash with a fork. You may choose to mash only some of the avocado and leaving some larger pieces.
- Mix the chopped eggs, lemon juice, garlic powder and chopped chives into the avocado.
- Add salt and pepper.
- Taste. You may choose to add more lemon juice if you want a zesty flavour, more garlic powder if you want a stronger garlic taste, and additional fresh herbs as desired.

Last reviewed: April 2025