



## HOW TO EAT WELL ON A TEXTURE MODIFIED DIET

This Guide has been created to help remove the stress of mealtimes for carers of people living with dysphagia, and more importantly help people living with dysphagia enjoy food again!

### What Is a Textured Modified Diet?

Texture modification is when food is mashed or pureed to make it safer to eat. When people have problems with swallowing, or controlling food within their mouth, they may require a texture modified diet to reduce the risk of choking or aspiration (food or fluid going into the airway).

### Who Requires a Textured Modified Diet?

A texture modified diet is most commonly needed in patients with stroke, progressive neurological disorders (motor neurone disease, Parkinson's disease), learning disabilities, elderly patients and some cancers or injury affecting the head and neck.

Attempting to swallow foods or liquids without the ability to do so carries a high risk of aspiration. This can contribute to chest infections, lung abscesses, aspiration pneumonia and acute asphyxiation.

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) will assess the individual's swallowing ability and provide guidance to the ward on appropriate texture modifications to ensure the patient is safe while eating and drinking, to minimise the risk of aspiration.

***Be it a family member, friend, ourselves or someone we are caring for, the challenge to modify delicious nutritional food can be completely overwhelming.***

Textured modified food generally looks sloppy and unappetising with the tendency to be overwhelmingly brown, lack flavour, and even smell a little strange. The food itself is usually watered down to achieve the right consistency, consequently diluting the calorific and nutritional value. Furthermore, a person on a texture modified diet can often be embarrassed and feel undignified eating pureed or mashed foods. All these factors can make mealtime an anxiety riddled experience for all.

There is no real surprise then that those on a textured modified diet tend to eat and drink less and can be at risk of malnutrition.

***However, food is one of the greatest pleasures in life and can still be for those with dysphagia.***

# HERE ARE SOME TIPS & TRICKS TO MAKE MEALTIMES ON A TEXTURE MODIFIED DIET SAFE, DELICIOUS, NUTRITIOUS & ENJOYABLE AGAIN!

## Make Meals as Visually Appealing as Possible

Ever heard “we eat with our eyes?”. When preparing pureed and mashed foods, presentation is key -

- Try food moulding and piping to recreate the look of regular textured meals
- Try using garnishes to add good colour and appeal on the plate
- Keep meats, vegetables and grains separate rather than blended together. This allows the person eating to know what they are eating and to enjoy each food for its own unique flavour.

## Don't Forget About the Taste

When preparing textured modified meals, sometimes we can get hung up on getting the texture and the look right and forget to make it varied and flavourful. Pureeing and mashing can also alter and dilute the taste of foods. Here are some ways to add flavour and keep it exciting:

- When adding liquids to purees, use stock, milk, cream, juice, yogurts etc rather than just water to add colour and nutritional value
- Vary the type of sauce or gravy served with the meal each night to avoid flavour fatigue.
- Use herbs and spices to add flavour.
- Roast vegetables to intensify flavour.
- As with any cooking - don't forget to explore and incorporate a variety and complexity of flavour profiles such as nuts, feta cheese, infused oils etc.
- Ensure meals are served at the correct temperature to optimise taste — hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

## Give Yourself a Break

Cooking at the best of times can become tedious and monotonous. If you run out of ideas to keep texture modified meals interesting or just need a couple of nights off, there are ready made meal and delivery services such as **Care Food Co.** to support you. **Care Food Co.** was created to take the struggle out of mealtimes for people and their families on a textured modified diet. They do the thinking and hard work for you by carefully crafting their meals with all the above considerations in mind.

## Keep It Social

- Where possible, encourage people with swallowing problems to maintain their independence during mealtimes & this includes if possible, asking their permission before you offer assistance, and giving them choice and control over what they eat & drink.
- Don't rush - this can especially have dire consequences for someone with dysphagia. Take the time to talk to the person about what is on their plate or in their cup, and to smell the food and drink and talk about how it was prepared.
- Sit down together and share the meal time.

As you can see, food is a pleasure in life that with some planning and support doesn't need to cease with a textured modified diet.