

Eating Healthy with Soft Foods

A GUIDE FOR SWALLOWING AND CHEWING ISSUES

Note: This guide is for people with swallowing or chewing issues and who need softer foods, often referred to by your healthcare professional as soft and bite-sized, minced and moist, and mechanical soft, texture modification. It will help you have a balanced diet using MyPlate.



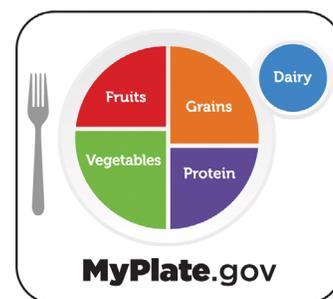
Understanding Mechanical Soft/Mechanically Altered Foods

Mechanical soft foods are made to be easy to eat without the need to chew down into little pieces that are safe to swallow. These foods help people who may have missing teeth or who can't chew hard foods or those who are recovering from surgery or stroke. The mechanical soft diet includes soft foods and helps you safely swallow and move foods in your mouth.

Balancing Your Plate: MyPlate for Mechanical Soft Diets

Like everyone else, it's important to eat different foods from all five food groups. MyPlate recommends making half your plate fruits and vegetables. Try a variety and include fresh, frozen, canned, and dried that are prepared safely. Choose a variety of grains, protein foods, and low-fat or fat-free dairy, including lactose-free options and fortified soy milk or yogurt.

Enjoy each food group with no changes, specific changes, or caution.



FRUITS

- ✓ Enjoy soft fruits like ripe bananas, applesauce, canned peaches, or pears without added sugar, or 100% fruit juice.
- ↻ Remove skin and seeds from fresh whole melons, apples, pears, and peaches. Chop them into small pea-size pieces and eat raw or cooked.
- ! Berries with large seeds (e.g., blackberries, raspberries) and dried fruits can be difficult to chew.

VEGETABLES

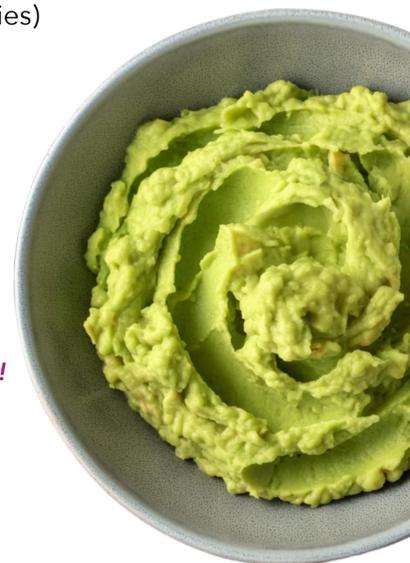
- ✓ Enjoy soups, sauces, and purees, without meat, most canned vegetables, and 100% vegetable juices.
- ↻ Chop or dice fresh vegetables into small pieces and cook until tender. Cut up or mash avocado.
- ! Raw vegetables, corn on the cob, and corn kernels may be too difficult to chew.

Bonus Tips

Make sure to eat **dark green**, **red** and **orange** vegetables regularly.

Keep soft vegetable skin for nutritious fiber! Only peel thick skin for items such as sweet potatoes.

No need to cook avocado!



Aim for $\frac{1}{2}$ your grains to be whole grains, like brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, buckwheat, and quinoa.



GRAINS

- ✓ Enjoy soft bread and cooked cereals.
Cook grains until soft.
- ↻ Warm tortillas and wraps until soft.
Soak cold cereals in water or low-fat or fat-free dairy, including lactose-free options and fortified soy milk or yogurt.
- ! Popcorn, whole rye bread, wild rice, whole wheat crackers, and grains mixed with seeds, dried fruits, or nuts can be difficult to chew and swallow.



PROTEIN FOODS

- ✓ Enjoy soft scrambled eggs.
Cut up and remove bones and skin from meats, poultry, and seafood. Shellfish should be shell-free.
Meats can be cut-up, minced, or ground. Cook beans, peas, and lentils until soft and mashable.
- ↻ Mince or grind deli or luncheon meats, soy-based products, and finely chop firm tofu and hard-boiled eggs for easy consumption.
Choose creamy nut butter and alternatives. However, be cautious while eating nut butters since they can ball up in the mouth before swallowing.
- ! Nuts, seeds, and fried eggs can be hard to chew and may become a choking hazard.

DAIRY

- ✓ Enjoy low-fat or fat-free dairy milk or yogurt or lactose-free or fortified soy versions, and soft/processed cheeses. Blended smoothies with milk or yogurt and fruits provide several food groups and are easy to eat!
- ↻ Melt hard natural cheeses to make them easier to eat.



Explore cultural cuisine to fit your eating style. Enjoy foods from all the food groups that are easy to eat and are tasty. **Make every bite count!**



Recipe Fun: Chicken Fajita Pasta

🕒 Ready in 25 minutes 🍴 Makes 4 servings

Per serving
680 calories
4 g total sugar
18 g dietary fiber

- Boil a large pot of water, add 16 oz package of whole wheat fettuccini. Cook as directed on package. Drain and cover to keep warm.
Don't cook it too hard. Make it soft but not sticky!
- Heat 2 tsp canola oil on medium heat. Add 1 tsp ground cumin and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne pepper. Add 18 oz cut up, boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Cook until it's soft and reaches 165 degrees - about 5 minutes. Remove chicken from pan and cut into tiny pea-sized pieces. **Cook it until it's soft but not brown!**
- Add 2 tsp canola oil and 1 tsp ground cumin in the same pan. Add 1 finely chopped yellow onion and cook until it's soft, about 4 minutes. Add 3 thinly sliced bell peppers and 2 minced garlic cloves. Cook 4 more minutes or until vegetables are very soft. **You don't need to peel peppers! Use the whole veggie for extra fiber.**
- Add cooked chicken back in the pan with the onion-pepper mixture. Add juice from two limes, 1 Tbsp dried oregano, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped cilantro. Mix everything together.
- Add salt and pepper to taste. Take off the peel and pit from one avocado, mash it and gently stir it into the mix. Serve & enjoy!

For food safety information scan here:

