

# Easy to Chew Diet

## What is an easy to chew diet?

Some people may have problems chewing foods that are hard or crunchy. This can happen if you have poorly fitting dentures or missing teeth.

Easy to chew foods are **soft** and **moist** so that they are easier to eat.

## General tips

- Choose soft moist foods. You may need to chop, mince, or mash foods to make them easier to chew.
- Avoid dry, crispy, stringy, or tough foods as these are hard to chew.
- Use butter, margarine, oils, salad dressing, or sour cream to moisten foods.
- Blend fruits into smoothies, milkshakes, popsicles, puddings, or sauces.
- Soak bread, biscuits, hard cookies, or muffins in milk or soup to soften, if required.
- Cut meat into bite-sized pieces. Grind or blend meat if it is still too hard or chewy.
- Braise, boil, simmer, or poach meats slowly in water, broth, or juice to make them tender. Or try a slow cooker or pressure cooker to soften meats.
- Use gravy, broth, or sauce to moisten meat, poultry, or fish.

## Eating well

Canada's Food Guide recommends choosing a variety of foods from all four food groups each day. This includes Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives.

## Vegetables and Fruit

**Adults (over 18 years) - 7 to 10 servings a day**

**Teens (14 to 18 years) - 7 to 8 servings a day**

**Children (2 to 13 years) - 4 to 6 servings a day**

Examples of 1 serving:

- 1 medium size vegetable or fruit
- ½ cup (125 mL) fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables or fruit
- ½ cup (125 mL) vegetable or fruit juice

## Foods to choose:

- soft cooked or canned vegetables
- soft raw vegetables (such as zucchini, cucumbers, mushrooms, tomatoes)
- very finely shredded salads or coleslaw
- fresh, soft cooked or canned fruit
- fruit with tough skins and/or seeds removed (such as in sliced apple or watermelon)
- applesauce or pureed fruit cups
- crushed pineapple
- cooked or stewed dried fruit
- vegetable and fruit juice

## Foods to avoid:

- hard raw vegetables (such as carrots, celery)
- leafy salads (such as tossed salad, Caesar salad, spinach)
- potato skins
- hard fresh fruit (such as whole apple with skin)

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## Grain Products

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**Adults (over 18 years) - 6 to 8 servings a day**

**Teens (14 to 18 years) - 6 to 7 servings a day**

**Children (2 to 13 years) - 3 to 6 servings a day**

Examples of 1 serving:

- ¾ cup (175 mL) hot cereal
- 1 slice of bread
- ½ cup (125 mL) cooked pasta or rice

### Foods to choose:

- soft breads, buns, buttered toast, or soft tortillas
- breads with small seeds (such as flax bread)
- soft baked foods (such as biscuits, moist muffins)
- all cooked cereals (oatmeal, oat bran, cream of wheat, Red River®)
- cold cereals that soften in milk (such as cornflakes, bran flakes)
- wheat bran or ground flax seed stirred into cereals
- pancakes, waffles, or French toast with apple sauce or syrup to moisten
- soft cooked pasta, rice, couscous, or barley
- tapioca, rice, or bread pudding
- moist bread stuffing
- soft crackers (such as soda crackers, Ritz®)
- soft cereal bars (such as Nutri-Grain® bars)

### Foods to avoid:

- dry, crusty, or chewy breads (such as pitas, bagels, English muffins, or crusty buns)
- hard toast (dry toast, bread sticks)
- pizza crust

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## Milk and Alternatives

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**Adults (over 18 years) - 2 to 3 servings a day**

**Teens (14 to 18 years) - 3 to 4 servings a day**

**Children (2 to 13 years) - 2 to 4 servings a day**

Examples of 1 serving:

- 1 cup (250 mL) milk or fortified soy beverage
- ¾ cup (175 mL) yogurt
- ½ cup (125 mL) pudding or custard (made with milk or fortified soy beverage)
- 1½ oz (50 gram) cheese
- 1 cup (250 mL) cottage cheese

### Foods to choose:

- plain or flavoured milk, buttermilk, soy milk, or milkshakes
- smooth yogurt, custard, or pudding
- cottage cheese or ricotta cheese
- soft cheeses such as cream cheese or cheese sauce
- dice, cubed, or grated brick cheese

### Foods to avoid:

- yogurt, custard, or pudding with granola, nuts or seeds

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## Meat and Alternatives

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**Adults (over 18 years) - 2 to 3 servings a day**

**Teens (14 to 18 years) - 2 to 3 servings a day**

**Children (2 to 13 years) - 1 to 2 servings a day**

Examples of 1 serving:

- 2½ oz (75 gram) or ½ cup (125 mL) cooked meat, poultry, or fish
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) peanut or nut butter
- ¾ cup (175 mL) cooked beans or lentils
- ¾ cup (175 mL) tofu

### **Foods to choose:**

- tender and moist poultry
- tender and moist meat (such as strip loin, roast, Salisbury steak, hamburger patty)
- ground meat
- minced meat formed into another product that is tender (such as meatballs, meatloaf)
- diced or flaked canned meat
- sausages and wieners with soft casing
- tender, boneless fish that flakes easily
- canned fish with bones removed or mashed
- casseroles made with soft foods
- all cooked eggs including omelets and quiche
- sandwiches with minced fillings (egg, chicken, tuna salad) or cheese, without lettuce or raw vegetables
- very soft, cooked beans, peas, or lentils
- smooth nut butters
- tofu
- all soups

### **Foods to avoid:**

- bacon, bacon bits, or beef jerky
- sausages or wieners with hard casing (such as Kolbassa, garlic sausage)
- wieners or hamburgers in a bun
- large chopped or whole nuts

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### **Desserts and Snacks**

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#### **Foods to choose:**

- ice cream, sherbet, popsicles
- Jell-O® and Bavarians
- soft cookies (such as shortbread, Peak Freans® Digestive biscuits)
- soft, baked desserts (such as moist cakes, pies)
- sliced or cut pickles

### **Foods to avoid:**

- hard candy, toffee, licorice, gum
- baked desserts with nuts or seeds
- chips, popcorn, pretzels, or Cheezies®
- whole hard pickles or pickled onions

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### **Condiments and Sauces**

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#### **Foods to avoid:**

- herbs, spices, and seasonings with hard seeds (such as coriander, whole pepper)
- spreads, gravies, or sauces that have large, hard pieces

If you have tried the food choices in this handout and still can't find enough foods you can chew, talk to your dietitian or swallowing team.