

MECHANICALLY SOFT MEALS FAQ

What does mechanically soft mean?

Mechanically soft means your food is chopped and/or cooked appropriately so that you can safely eat without increased risk of choking. If you have difficulties chewing or swallowing, you may need to eat according to the following categories based on your abilities.

- Level 1. Level 1 foods include pureed or smooth foods that do not require any chewing.
 - Examples: yogurt, mashed potatoes with gravy, smooth soups, and pureed vegetables and meats.
- Level 2. These types of foods require chewing and have soft, moist textures. They may include items which are prepared to be softer, mashed, or moistened. Dry foods like chips, crackers, or popcorn, and nuts and seeds should be avoided.
 - Examples: ground meats with sauces, cottage cheese, scrambled eggs, nut butters, cooked or soft fruits vegetables.
- Level 3. Level 3 foods include soft-solid foods that need more chewing. Dry foods like chips, crackers, or popcorn, and nuts and seeds should be avoided.
 - Examples: meat, fruit, and vegetables that are easy to cut or mash
- Level 4. Inclusive of most foods.

Our mechanically soft meals are level 3 on the National Dysphasia Diet scale.

Are mechanically soft meals right for me?

If your healthcare provider and/or speech-language pathologist say that you are at increased risk for aspiration (when food or liquid enter your lungs), you may need mechanically soft foods. Mechanically soft foods are easier to swallow and can lower your risk for aspirating.

The following conditions may put you at higher risk for aspiration.

- Dentition issues or ill-fitting dentures, Mouth sores, Dry mouth or poor saliva production, Head, neck, and throat cancer, Neurological conditions, Stroke, Esophageal blockages

Talk to your healthcare provider or speech language pathologist to see what foods and drinks are appropriate for you and your condition.

What if my doctor said I cannot eat certain foods, but I see them in your meals?

These meals are only appropriate for level 3 dysphagia. If there are foods of concern, please schedule a consult with one of our Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. If you are unsure what level of the dysphagia diet you are, consult your healthcare provider.

Are these foods pureed?

No, these foods are a soft solid texture that are easy to chew and swallow but are not pureed.

Can I order a mechanically soft meal even if I do not have issues?

Yes, however, other meal plans may be more appropriate and less restrictive.

Do I have to have a prescription to order this?

You do not need a prescription to order mechanically soft meals.

Can I add additional foods to my meals?

Yes, you may add additional items to your meals. However, you should try to avoid items like dry foods like chips, crackers, or popcorn, and nuts and seeds.

What are the textures for meat?

Our meats are ground and minced – we use items like whole muscle chicken breast, cooked and ground onsite.

What if I am missing teeth?

Please schedule a consult with one of our Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. If you are unsure what level of the dysphagia diet you are, consult your healthcare provider.

What happens if I have allergies/preferences/vegetarian?

Our meals can accommodate for certain food preferences and allergens. We are not an allergen-free facility. Our preferences allow for exclusion of these ingredients: beef, chicken, pork, seafood, shellfish, tofu, bell peppers, grapefruit, leafy greens, mushrooms, or soy. We also provide vegetarian options. However, if multiple preferences are selected, your meal options may be limited.

Are all menu items chopped?

Not all items are chopped. Some items, like vegetables, are cooked soft enough to fit the level 3 dysphagia diet requirements.

Are these meals low acid or bland?

We do not currently offer bland or low-acid foods. Plans can be customized if you would like to exclude a certain dish or menu item from your meals.

Schedule a 10 minute consult with our Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to learn more!