

## Mechanical Soft Foods

**Mechanical soft** means foods are soft, and easy to chew and swallow. This can be helpful if someone has few or no teeth. This also is important if someone has trouble moving food in his/her mouth.

Softness of food depends on:

- The food itself
- How the food is cooked
- How long the food is cooked

**For example:** A raw carrot stick is hard, crunchy and takes jaw strength to chew. Cooked carrots can be soft or hard depending on how they are cooked.

Steaming for a short time will keep them hard. Boiling them for some time will soften them. A good test for softness is trying to mash the food with a fork. If this is easy to do, then the food is soft. If it takes a lot of force/push, then the food is not soft. If the food is stringy or hard, and does not mash easily, it will be too hard to chew for the person on a mechanical soft diet.

Here is a chart to help you select foods for a mechanical soft diet. Be sure all foods, soups and liquids are served at the recommended consistency if thickened liquids are needed.

<b>Food groups</b>	<b>Foods allowed</b> <i>Easy-to-chew foods</i>	<b>Foods not allowed</b> <i>Hard-to-chew foods</i>
<b>Dairy</b>	All types, including yogurt and ice cream without nuts – as tolerated	Ice cream with nuts or chocolate chips
<b>Meat and protein</b>	Tender meat and poultry (generally should be ground or chopped), soft fish/shellfish; cheese, eggs (including soft scrambled and egg substitutes); peanut butter, soft beans, peas and lentils – as tolerated	Any tough, chewy meat, poultry or fish; meats with gristle or poultry with tough, chewy skin; nuts and seeds; raw eggs or eggs cooked less than 7 minutes
<b>Fruits</b>	Soft and peeled canned, chopped cooked, mashed, thawed, whole – as tolerated	Fruits with skins; chewy dried fruits; pomegranates
<b>Vegetables</b>	All types, including soft potatoes, lima beans, peas creamed corn; canned, chopped, cooked, mashed, whole – as tolerated	Whole corn; raw carrots, raw celery, raw greens and lettuce; any hard or stringy vegetables
<b>Soups</b>	All types with soft ingredients – as tolerated	Soups with hard meats or vegetables.
<b>Breads and cereals</b>	All types, including breads and cereals without hard-to-chew ingredients or crusts, and noodles – as tolerated	Hard, crunchy cereals; hard, crusty bread or bread/crackers with seeds, nuts or hard pieces; hard pretzels; popcorn; fruitcakes