



Food suggestions following cleft surgery: information for families

After cleft surgery, it is advisable to have a sloppy or soft diet for the first two weeks. Your child will find this more comfortable and it will reduce the risk of damage to the repair. Your child should be able to build up to their normal diet by the third week. This information sheet about suggested foods accompanies the cleft surgery information sheets produced by Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). It contains suggestions for all age groups but please note that some foods may not be appropriate for children under one year old.

Please note: This information sheet suggests specific brand names but own-label foods can be substituted – including them in this information sheet does not mean that they are recommended by GOSH and alternative products may be available.

General tips

- It can be easy for children to burn their lips and mouth after surgery so please be very careful to check the temperature of hot foods and drinks before giving to your child.
- Feed your child small amounts more frequently – this can be more manageable than larger meals three times a day.
- Try using sauces, gravy, butter, cream or custard to soften foods.
- Soften foods by chopping, mincing or mashing.
- Avoid foods that are hard, sharp or sticky or require a lot of chewing.
- Avoid foods in hard batter or breadcrumbs.

Foods to try

Cereals

- Porridge or Ready-Brek® made with milk
- Weetabix®, cornflakes or Rice Krispies® well soaked in milk
- Bread – cut off the crusts and do not toast

Meat and poultry

- Well-cooked and tender minced meat (shepherd's pie or cottage pie)
- Corned beef hash or meat loaf
- Chilli con carne
- Skinless sausages
- Tender meat in stews, hotpots or casseroles – do not use large chunks of meat

Fish

- Flaked fish in white, cheese or parsley sauce
- Fisherman's pie, fish cakes, fish and potato nests
- Fish mousse or light pate
- Tinned fish such as salmon or sardines
- Tuna mixed with mayonnaise

Eggs and cheese

- Scrambled, poached, boiled or as an omelette
- Egg mayonnaise
- Egg dishes such as sweet or savoury egg custard or soufflés

- Quiche
- Cauliflower cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Grated cheese
- Dairylea® triangles, cheese spread or cream cheese

Pulses and nuts

- Baked beans with grated cheese
- Mushy peas
- Lentils made into dahl
- Smooth peanut butter

Note: Avoid whole nuts due to the risk of choking

Pasta and rice dishes

- Lasagne
- Moussaka
- Bolognese sauce with pasta
- Macaroni cheese
- Ravioli
- Pasta with different sauces such as goats' cheese, mushroom, carbonara or creamy tomato
- Tinned spaghetti
- Noodles
- Rice

Potatoes and vegetables

- Soft carrot, parsnip, turnip, swede, cauliflower, broccoli and courgettes are all easy to mash
- Avoid raw vegetables
- Try adding grated cheese, extra butter or margarine and serve with white sauce, cheese sauce or gravy
- Ratatouille
- Instant mashed potato as a quick alternative to fresh
- Mash the inside of a jacket potato with butter and add a suitable filling
- Dips such as hummus, guacamole or taramasalata

Fruits

- Tinned or stewed fruit such as apples, pears and peaches
- Soft fresh fruit such as banana, melon, strawberries, soft plums

Desserts and snacks

- Milk puddings such as rice pudding or semolina
- Yoghurt, fromage frais or milk jelly
- Ice cream or sorbet
- Jelly or trifle
- Mousses and whips
- Ready-made chocolate desserts
- Egg custard
- Crème caramel
- Blancmange
- Home-made, powdered, ready-made cartons or tins of custard
- Fruit fools and purees
- Cheesecake
- Bread and butter pudding
- Sponge pudding with custard or cream
- Lemon meringue pudding
- Fruit crumble
- Savoury or sweet pancakes
- Biscuits dipped in a hot drink to soften
- Soft cake

Drinks

- Milk shakes
- Hot milky drinks
- Fruit juices
- Complan® or Build Up®

Sample menu

Breakfast

- Diluted fruit juice if desired
- Cereal or porridge with milk
- Bread (crusts removed) with margarine/butter and jelly-type jam
- Egg/fish if desired

- Milk or tea/coffee with milk

Lunch

- Meat/fish/eggs/cheese/baked beans
- Potato/rice/pasta/bread (crusts removed)
- Soft cooked vegetables
- Soft fruit or suitable pudding from suggestions above

Evening meal

- Meat/fish/eggs/cheese
- Potato/rice/pasta/bread (crusts removed)

Milk, milk shakes, warm milky drinks and squash along with snacks of soft fruit, yoghurt, fromage frais and cake can be taken in between meals throughout the day if desired.

Further information and support

If you have any questions, please telephone us on the numbers below.

At GOSH

- Panther Ward – 020 7829 8825
- Clinical Nurse Specialist – 020 7813 8439
- Dental department – 020 7829 8614

At St Andrew's Centre, Broomfield Hospital

- Phoenix Ward – 01245 513 256 or 01245 513 258
- Clinical Nurse Specialist – 01245 516 029
- Dental department – 01245 516 012



Great Ormond Street and St Andrew's

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