



# Difficulty with Swallowing

Cancer and its treatment can sometimes make it hard to swallow food. If you are having trouble swallowing, try eating softer, more liquid foods. Using liquid nutrition drinks may be helpful if you are not able to eat the foods you usually would eat. Your doctor may also refer you to a speech therapist to teach you how to swallow more easily.

- ◆ If appropriate, get a swallowing evaluation for recommendations about what the best diet and fluid consistency are for you.
- ◆ Drink 6 to 8 cups of fluid each day and thicken the fluid to the right consistency for you.
- ◆ Eat small meals often during the day.
- ◆ If you need thicker liquids to help you swallow, try adding gelatin, tapioca, flour, cornstarch, pureed vegetables, instant potatoes, dry infant cereals, or commercially prepared thickeners.
- ◆ If you cough or choke when you eat, report this to your doctor immediately, especially if you also have a fever.
- ◆ Talk with your health care team! Let them know if food does not taste good or if you are having a hard time swallowing food or fluids.

## Selection of Thickening Agents

- ◆ *Gelatin*: Can be used with cakes, cookies, crackers, sandwiches, pureed fruits, and other cold foods. It forms a soft gel that aids in swallowing these foods. Mix 1 tablespoon unflavored gelatin until dissolved in 2 cups liquid and pour over food. Allow food to sit until it is saturated.
- ◆ *Tapioca, flour, or cornstarch*: Will thicken liquids to different consistencies but need to be cooked.
- ◆ *Pureed vegetables*: Useful for soups but can alter the flavor.
- ◆ *Dry infant cereal, instant potatoes*: Useful for soups but can alter the flavor. Useful when a very thick cereal product is needed.
- ◆ *Commercial thickeners*: A fluid's consistency can be adjusted depending upon the amount used. Follow the instructions on the label.



# Recipes Recipes Recipes

## Boiled Custard

2 cups milk  
2 eggs  
¼ cup sugar  
1½ tsp cornstarch  
1 tsp vanilla  
Pinch of salt

In a medium saucepan, heat milk over medium-low heat until it just begins to bubble at the edges. Do not boil. Beat eggs, sugar, and cornstarch together in a separate bowl. Add a little of the

scalded milk to the egg mixture, stirring well. Add this mixture to the rest of the scalded milk, stirring constantly. Cook over low heat until the mixture coats a spoon. Remove from heat. When cool, add salt and vanilla. This is delicious by itself or over fruit or cake.

*Makes four servings. Each serving contains 150 calories and 7 grams protein (calculated with reduced-fat milk).*

## Blender Cream Soups

2 cups milk  
2 tbsp flour  
2 tbsp margarine, melted  
1 tsp salt  
Dash of pepper (as tolerated)

Mix all ingredients in a blender. This is the base for creamed vegetable soups. Blend with asparagus, broccoli, or other vegetables, such as mashed potatoes, peas, or carrots. Heat until thickened and serve.

*Makes four servings. Each serving of the base contains 130 calories and 5 grams protein (calculated with reduced-fat milk). To increase calories, use whole milk or half-and-half.*

### Variations:

*Asparagus:* 1 cup cooked asparagus, ¾ teaspoon sugar, plus the soup base. Blend in a blender and then heat until thickened and serve.

*Broccoli:* 1 cup of broccoli, 1 tablespoon diced and cooked onion, plus the soup base. Blend in a blender and then heat until thickened and serve.

---

# Food List

---

## Pureed Thick-Liquid Diet

---

Meat and meat substitutes	Thickened milk; yogurt without fruit; cottage cheese; sour cream; pureed meat, poultry, and fish; casseroles; soft scrambled eggs
Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta	Cooked cereals, such as cream of wheat or cream of rice; slurried* breads as tolerated; pureed pasta or rice
Fruits and vegetables	Pureed fruit and vegetables without seeds or skins; mashed potatoes; thickened juices and nectars
Condiments, beverages, and desserts	Thick syrups or honey; butter or margarine; spices; milkshakes; custard or pudding; slurried* cakes or cookies as tolerated

---

## Mechanical Soft Thick-Liquid Diet

---

Meat and meat substitutes	Milk, yogurt, cheeses, and sour cream; all eggs; ground meats and ground meat casseroles; fish; sandwiches made with ground meats or spreads
Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta	Soft breads; graham crackers; cookies; soft cold cereals in milk; pancakes and waffles; pasta; rice
Fruit and vegetables	Bananas; canned fruit; soft, well-cooked or pureed vegetables
Condiments, beverages, and desserts	Syrups and honey; butter and margarine; spices; thick fluids; soft desserts that do not require much chewing, such as ice cream, sherbet, flavored gelatin, pudding, custard, soft cakes, or soft cookies

---

---

If thin liquids are recommended for you, select from the following: coffee, tea, soft drinks, liquid nutritional supplements, Italian ice, sherbet, broth, or thin cream soups.

\*A slurry is a thickener dissolved in a liquid. A slurried bread or cake has a thickened liquid poured on top to make it easier to swallow.