

HELP FOR CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH CHEWING AND/OR SWALLOWING DIFFICULTY

Have you suddenly been faced with preparing medications for someone who can no longer swallow pills or meals for someone whose ability to chew and/or swallow has been diminished? Perhaps a speech therapist, who also serves as a swallow therapist, has ordered a “mechanical soft” diet. That is food that is mechanically altered for patients with difficulty chewing or swallowing. On one end of the spectrum are foods such as soft meat with a gravy or some other kind of sauce to make it easier to swallow, and on the other end foods such as pureed meats with additives for smoothness. While recovering stroke victims may start at the end with pureed meats and move up to soft meats with sauce, dementia patients are more likely to start with soft meats with sauce and move down to pureed meats. Patients who can normally do well with a little texture may temporarily do better with smoother foods if they are weak from illness.

When faced with this new dilemma of food and medication preparation, there usually isn’t much time to acquire a lot of knowledge or think creatively to come up with solutions. You may have consulted with a swallow therapist and have been given some guideline sheets. **YOU SHOULD CAREFULLY READ WHATEVER GUIDELINES WERE GIVEN TO YOU AND CONSULT THE SWALLOW THERAPIST IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS.** The following pages are just some supplementary ideas and information from someone who was once faced with this situation. These pages are intended to help you get started down the road. In time, you may gather more information and come up with some of your own ideas and creations to fit your needs.

If you find yourself in this situation, you will probably be needing a **food processor and/or a blender**. The difference between a blender and food processor is that a blender usually needs liquid to make things move, unless it has a dry blade. If you have a food processor, you may want a blender for making smoothies or for other purposes. Food processors usually don’t move liquids very well. Some manufacturers, such as Oster and Cuisinart, have been known to make blender and food processor combinations that use the same motor unit for both. Some food processors have blades at two levels, which works well if you want to puree larger amounts.

Here are some other things you may need. You may need a **pill grinder and/or splitter**, available at most any pharmacy. If you tell the pharmacist you have to split the pills, they may give you a free splitter. **ALWAYS MAKE SURE THE PILLS ARE SUITABLE FOR GRINDING OR SPLITTING**, if it’s necessary to grind or split the medications for the patient. Timed release pills should not be ground or split, and some medications are dangerous if released into the system too quickly by grinding. Check with the pharmacist. You may need a **thickener for liquids**, such as “Thick It” or “Thick and Easy.” (See Page 12.) Or you may need **gelatin** to “slurry” certain foods. (See “slurry” instructions under Breakfast or Snacks and Desserts, on pages 3 and 11.) A **pizza cutter** may be helpful for making bite-size pieces of certain foods. If the person tends to spill frequently, kitchen towels are good for **protection of clothing**. Cords with clips on the ends, like dentists use to attach napkins, can sometimes be ordered to easily put the kitchen towel up to the neck of the patient. If those clips are not available, try tying a small paper clamp, with the extensions up, on each end of a piece of yarn or ribbon. Then attach the clamps to the top of the kitchen towel.

People with chewing and/or swallowing problems usually eat very slowly. For that reason it may be best to serve hot courses and cold courses at different times. That way the hot food is more likely to stay warm while being eaten. Even when serving hot foods at a separate time, you may find it necessary to re-warm the food in the microwave at some point.

Notes:

MAKING MEDICATIONS PALATABLE

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

For patients who can no longer swallow pills, taking ground up medications can be a very unpleasant task. Again, remember that timed release medicines should not be ground up. You should also check with the pharmacist on other medications as to whether it is safe to release the medication into the patient's system quickly by giving it in ground up form. Some medicines are extremely bitter, such as guaifenesin, ranitidine, and docusate tablets, just to name a few. To make it easier for the patient to tolerate ground up medications, mixing the medications with a teaspoon of applesauce and then adding a couple of teaspoons of pudding can make the medications a lot more palatable. There are several different flavors of pudding cups available, so you can alternate flavors. Just keep the partially used pudding cups well covered in the refrigerator. For the really bitter medications, consider adding a little honey, agave syrup, stevia, or sugar. Touching the medication mixed with applesauce and pudding very, very lightly with the underside of the top of your (clean) index finger can give you a tiny taste of the medication mixture, which shouldn't affect the patient's dosage or you, unless you have a severe allergy to one of the ingredients. That tiny taste can give you an indication of the bitterness, if you have no other way to know. You may have more success in getting the patient to take his or her medications if you try to make them more palatable.

You can find pill splitters and pill grinders at most any pharmacy. It is usually easier to grind a couple of pills at a time, rather than 4 or 5 at one time. You may save yourself from some blisters or calluses on your fingers. (Note: Vitamin E is difficult to find in tablet form, except in multivitamins. If you need to supplement the patient's Vitamin E, Nature's Bounty makes a Vitamin E oil that is suitable for oral consumption.)

Many elderly patients need to take Docusate Sodium liquid as a stool softener laxative. This is to be administered with 6 to 8 oz. of beverage, such as juice or milk, to avoid throat irritation. However, neither fruit juice nor milk can camouflage the terribly bitter flavor. You might want to try this instead:

1/2 cup cold decaffeinated coffee

1/8 cup milk

1/8 cup liquid flavored creamer

NEVER HEAT IT. Medicines should not be heated. (If the patient needs his or her drinks thickened, you will need a commercial thickener, such as Thick It or Thick and Easy. You may be able to find it close to the nutrition supplement drinks at a store such as Walgreen's or Rite Aid.)

Notes:

HELP WITH BREAKFAST

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

PUREED SCRAMBLED EGGS

Add some very finely chopped olives to any of these for another layer of flavor. Cool the eggs a little, after cooking, if using a plastic food processor. When ready to serve, spraying a small circle of Easy Cheese on top and continuing inside the circle smaller and smaller to the center may make the eggs more appealing in appearance.

Creamy Eggs

3 eggs, scrambled, cooked, and pureed

Add and puree:

1/3 cup yogurt, sour cream, or cottage cheese

Salt and Pepper to taste

Warm in the microwave.

Tasty Tomato Eggs

3 eggs, scrambled, cooked, and pureed

Add and puree:

2 tablespoons ketchup

1/2 teaspoon onion powder

Salt and Pepper to taste

Warm in microwave.

Eggs Green with Envy

3 eggs, scrambled, cooked, and pureed

Add and puree:

1/2 of a ripe avocado, peeled

2 teaspoons plain yogurt, sour cream, or mayonnaise

Salt and Pepper to taste

Warm in microwave.

You may want to serve the patient "slurried" pancakes or muffins (without chunks, such as nuts or raisins). To do this, dissolve 1 tablespoon plain gelatin in 2 cups of liquid, or 1 tablespoon commercial thickener (such as Thick It or Thick and Easy) in 1/2 cup liquid. Pour enough liquid over the food item to completely saturate it and let it sit for at least 15 minutes to thoroughly soften.

Notes:

HELP WITH BREAKFAST - PART 2

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

Old Fashioned Oatmeal

(Oatmeal may have too much texture for some patients with more severe swallow problems. You could puree the dry oatmeal first or use a smoother cereal, such as baby cereal or cream of wheat.)

Place in large microwaveable bowl:

¼ cup old fashioned oats

¾ cup milk

Microwave on Medium High for 2 minutes.

Microwave on Medium Low for 15 minutes.

For variety, add one of the following:

1/3 cup applesauce

½ of a banana, mashed, plus a sprinkle of cinnamon

2 tablespoons maple syrup

Baby Oatmeal, Baby Rice Cereal, or Baby Mult-Grain Cereal

Mix in bowl:

½ cup cereal

½ cup milk (preferably whole)

Microwave on Medium for 30 seconds.

For variety, add one of the following:

6 tablespoons applesauce

1 mashed banana

2 tablespoons maple syrup

2 tablespoons jelly (not jam with seeds)

Stir. Reheat as needed.

Note: Recent reports have said that rice products contain an ingredient that can be harmful, but only if rice products are consumed frequently.

(Baby cereal can also be used to thicken certain things for persons with difficulty swallowing.)

Also try CREAM OF WHEAT. It's possible to prepare it in the microwave.

Notes:

HELP WITH LIGHTER MEALS

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

SOUPS:

Strain out ingredients such as potatoes, pasta, and vegetables and puree. Then add them back into the liquid part of the soup and stir until uniformly thick. If it is too thin, add some finely ground crackers or instant mashed potatoes or a commercial thickening agent designed for persons with swallowing problems, such as Thick It or Thick and Easy. (Look for it close to the nutrition supplement drinks in stores like Walgreen's or Rite Aid.)

SANDWICHES:

***Note that some patients with swallow problems cannot handle two different textures together. If in doubt, check with the swallow therapist.**

Moisturized Bread for Open Face Sandwiches

(This is for persons who can handle a little bit of texture.)

- (1) Whisk together 2 tablespoons milk and 1 tablespoon oil.
- (2) Remove the crust from a regular thickness slice of bread (about ½" thick). Don't use thicker bread. For thinner bread, use less of the milk and oil to avoid making the bread overly soggy. Adjust the amount of liquid for a bread slice that is smaller or larger than average.
- (3) Put 2 tablespoons of the milk/oil mixture on a plate and place the bread slice on top. Drizzle the remaining mixture around the top edge of the bread to make sure all edges are softened.
- (4) Microwave the bread on a Medium Low setting for about 30 seconds to help the bread evenly absorb the liquid.
- (5) Put the spread of your choice on the bread, and serve it with a fork. For patients with difficulty cutting with a fork, use a pizza cutter to cut both ways to make bite-size squares.

(If this technique of moisturizing the bread does not seem to work adequately for softening the bread, you may want to "slurry" the bread instead. See the slurry instructions for pancakes and muffins in the breakfast section.)

Notes:

HELP WITH LIGHTER MEALS - PART 2

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

SPREADS FOR OPEN FACE SANDWICHES (see "Moisturized Bread" on previous page):

***Remember that some swallow patients cannot handle two different textures together (such as bread with a spread).**

***IF THE CHUNKINESS OF RELISH IS A PROBLEM for the person, puree some pickles well (without juice) instead. That will be smoother than relish. (It's difficult to puree relish well. Because of the soft ingredients in it, the relish chunks cannot be ground finely.) You will need to puree a certain amount of pickles in order to make the food processor do its work. But you can put the excess in a jar and save it for convenient use later.**

Egg Salad Spread

6 large hard-boiled eggs, grated
1/4 cup mayonnaise (or part yogurt)
2 tablespoons mustard
1 tablespoon sweet or dill relish (*see relish note above)
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Tuna or Salmon Spread

Flake the canned tuna or salmon very fine using a fork, or a food processor, if necessary. Add enough mayonnaise and/or yogurt to make the fish creamy. Then add very finely chopped olives or sweet or dill relish to taste (*see relish note above). Salt and pepper to taste.

Chicken (or Turkey) Salad Spread

Puree chunks of cooked chicken (or turkey). If using white meat or part white meat, add applesauce until moistened. Then add mayonnaise or yogurt until creamy. Add sweet relish to taste (*see relish note above). Add salt and pepper to taste.

Ham Salad Spread

Puree chunks of cooked ham. Add applesauce until moistened. Add mayonnaise or yogurt until creamy. Add mustard to taste. Add horse radish sauce, just a little at a time, to taste. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Bologna Spread

Puree about 8 oz. or 8 thin slices of bologna with 3 tablespoons of Miracle Whip or mayonnaise, or use part yogurt. Add 1 tablespoon of dill or sweet relish (*see relish note above). For bologna and cheese, spray some strips of Easy Cheese on top after you have put the bologna spread on top of the bread. (Put the cheese on top after cutting the sandwich, if the patient needs it cut for him or her.)

Tip: Extra bologna spread may be frozen and then thawed and stirred when needed.

Peanut Butter and Jelly

Add enough jelly to the peanut butter to make it non-sticky and very easy to swallow. Spread the mixture on the moisturized bread. Put some jelly (with no seeds) in a squeeze bottle and drizzle the jelly back and forth across the sandwich to make a design (after cutting it in pieces, if the patient needs to have it cut for him or her).

Notes:

HELP WITH LIGHTER MEALS - PART 3

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

***Remember that some swallow patients cannot handle two different textures together.**

Sometimes when other family members are eating things together as a family that are not suitable for the patient with chewing and/or swallowing problems, it seems sad to make that person feel "left out." On this page and the next page there are some ways you may be able to adapt some of these foods to include the family member with chewing and/or swallowing difficulty.

Open Face "Hot Dog"

Cut a piece of regular thickness, square or rectangular bread in half. Trim the crust. Whisk 1 tablespoon milk and 1-1/2 teaspoons oil. Put the mixture on a plate and place the bread on top.

Puree a wiener.

Add and puree:

- 1 tablespoon applesauce

- 1 teaspoon ketchup

- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise

Spoon pureed mixture on the bread and shape to resemble a wiener.

When ready to serve, warm in the microwave.

Drizzle mustard on top after warming (and after cutting with pizza cutter for patient, if needed).

Open Face "Hamburger"

Whisk 2 tablespoons milk and 1 tablespoon oil.

Trim a regular thickness piece of bread into a round shape, like a hamburger bun.

Put the liquid mixture on a plate and place the bread on top.

Puree a 1/4-pound cooked hamburger patty.

Add and puree:

- 2 tablespoons applesauce

- 3 tablespoons ketchup

- 1/2 teaspoon mustard

- 2 teaspoons dill relish (*see relish note at top of previous page)

Spoon the pureed mixture on top of the bread and spread it to resemble a hamburger patty.

When ready to serve, warm it in the microwave

Option 1 – "Hamburger Deluxe" – Drizzle some ketchup on top for color after warming (and after cutting with pizza cutter for patient, if needed).

Option 2 – "Cheeseburger" – Spray some strips of Easy Cheese on top after warming (and after cutting with pizza cutter for patient, if needed).

"Chili Dog" or "Chili Burger"

Follow directions for bread above.

Chili Dog: Puree wiener and 3 tablespoons chili beans

Chiliburger: Puree a 1/4-pound cooked hamburger patty and 3 tablespoons chili beans

Add and puree:

- 2 tablespoons ketchup

- 1 tablespoon Heinz 57 Sauce

Place on moistened bread as indicated above.

Spray some strips of Easy Cheese on top after warming (and after cutting with pizza cutter for patient, if needed).

Notes:

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HELP WITH LIGHTER MEALS - PART 4

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

***Remember that some patients with swallow problems cannot handle two different textures together. If in doubt, check with the swallow therapist.**

Mini-Pizza

1. Whisk 2 tablespoons milk and 1 tablespoon oil.
2. Trim the crust from a slice of regular thickness and size bread.
3. Put the liquid on a plate and place the bread on top.
4. Sprinkle grated cheese on top of the bread.
5. Puree some cooked sausage. Then add enough pizza sauce to make it moist and smooth.
(You can now get pizza sauce in a squeeze bottle.)
6. Spread the sausage mixture on top of the cheese.
7. Sprinkle very finely crushed pineapple that has been drained on a paper towel OR very finely chopped olives and very finely chopped mushrooms.
8. Microwave on Medium setting for about 45 seconds

Note: If cheese hardening before the patient is finished eating is a problem, rewarm the pizza until the cheese is soft again.

Tip: Extra pizzas may be made and frozen in sandwich containers.

Notes:

HELP WITH MAIN MEALS

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

As mentioned earlier, you may find it more convenient to serve the patient's *hot and cold foods at a separate time* if the patient eats slowly. It may save reheating the hot foods, or at least reheating them an additional time.

Pureed *tossed salad* is not appealing to some people, even if you drizzle some dressing on it. The salad can take on a kind of "slimy" texture if completely pureed. If the patient is able to handle a little texture, you may be able to chop the salad very finely in the food processor and then add sufficient dressing to make it easy to chew and swallow. (*Consult the swallow therapist if you are uncertain.*)

A good side dish for a main meal is *mashed white potatoes or mashed sweet potatoes*. White potatoes are inflammatory, and sweet potatoes are anti-inflammatory. Be sure the mashed potatoes have no chunks and are not too thick. An easy way to make white mashed potatoes, if you don't have time to make a big batch of homemade mashed potatoes, is to scoop out a baked potato and mash it up and add some milk and some butter or margarine. For variety you can add some sour cream and/or garlic powder. For sweet potatoes, freshly cooked are the best, of course, but you could mash canned sweet potatoes, if necessary. You can add a little butter or margarine and some honey or agave syrup, or for variety you could perk up the flavor with some orange juice or pineapple juice or maple syrup instead. Other options for side dish starches are *well-cooked rice or pasta that has been pureed*. A little butter or margarine with milk can add richness to the flavor while adding smoothness to the texture.

Pureed *baked beans* are a good complement for some meals. They can also be substituted for meat as a protein source. Drain the juice and puree the beans, and then add some of the drained juice for smoothness.

Pasta main dishes may be pureed for the patient. You can add some milk and some butter or margarine to cheesy pasta dishes. You can add water, as needed, to pureed non-dairy pasta dishes, such as spaghetti. If diluting the ingredients has diluted the flavor, add more seasoning.

To puree *fruit or vegetables* is not so difficult. You can just puree canned fruit, drained, or a vegetable, cooked until tender and drained. Then add some of its own juice back to make it the right consistency. You may need to put blueberries and peas through a sieve to remove the skins. It might be a good idea to keep some baby food fruits and vegetables on hand to save time, when needed.

Preparing *pureed meats* is a little more tricky. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS PUREE THE MEAT TO AS FINE A TEXTURE AS POSSIBLE BEFORE ADDING SOMETHING FOR SMOOTHNESS, IF THE PATIENT NEEDS UNIFORM TEXTURE. IF YOU PUREE THE MEAT AFTER YOU ADD SOMETHING, IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO PUREE IT TO A FINE TEXTURE. You must add something to the meat to give it a smooth texture, easy to swallow, yet retain good flavor. Of course an obvious possibility for a flavorful additive for the meat is gravy. Nothing can beat good homemade gravy for its all-natural ingredients and delicious flavor, but jars of gravy could be purchased at the store, if necessary. You could freeze left-over homemade or store-bought gravy in one-cup batches for future use. Homemade gravy isn't always available. Store-bought gravy may become expensive, or you may not like to use it often if it has many additives. Besides that, other options can add variety for your patient. On the next page you will find some flavorful sauce ideas for adding to pureed meats for smoothness.

Notes:

HELP WITH MAIN MEALS - PART 2

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

SAUCES FOR PUREED MEATS

You should ALWAYS PUREE THE MEAT BEFORE YOU ADD SOMETHING FOR SMOOTHNESS because once you add something it's impossible to puree the meat to a fine consistency. These sauce recipes are DESIGNED FOR ABOUT 4 TO 6 OZ. OF MEAT. Mix the sauce ingredients and add as much as needed for the right texture. If more sauce is needed, add more of the ingredients.

For Cooked Hamburger

4 tablespoons applesauce
2 tablespoons ketchup
1 teaspoon soy sauce

For Cooked Chicken

4 tablespoons applesauce
1 tablespoon ketchup
1 tablespoon mayonnaise or plain yogurt
1 to 2 teaspoons of soy sauce

For Cooked Pork Chops or Steak

5 tablespoons applesauce
1 tablespoon Heinz 57 Sauce

For Cooked Ham or Turkey

4 tablespoons applesauce
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon white vinegar
2 teaspoons smooth jelly,
or jellied (not whole berry) cranberry sauce

For Cooked Sausage

5 tablespoons applesauce
1 teaspoon mustard
Allspice, as needed

For Cooked Fish

1 tablespoon applesauce
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
2 tablespoons plain yogurt
2 teaspoons dill relish*
1/2 teaspoon horseradish sauce

Barbecue Flavor for Beef, Chicken, or Pork

3 tablespoons applesauce
3 tablespoons barbecue sauce, OR:
2 tablespoons ketchup
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon cider vinegar
1 teaspoon oil
1 teaspoon honey
1/8 teaspoon chili powder

**IF THE CHUNKINESS OF RELISH IS A PROBLEM for the person, puree some pickles well (without juice) instead. That will be smoother than relish. (It's difficult to puree relish well. Because of the soft ingredients in it, the relish chunks cannot be ground finely.) You will need to puree a certain amount of pickles in order to make the food processor do its work. But you can put the excess in a jar and save it for convenient use later.*

Notes:

HELP WITH SNACKS AND DESSERTS

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

Custards and puddings are snacks well suited to someone with chewing problems. A healthful option similar to pudding is yogurt. It's very good for the digestive tract. It's an important snack for the patient who has been on anti-biotics recently. It replaces the friendly bacteria needed that have been destroyed by the anti-biotics.

Greek yogurt is thicker than regular yogurt, and it also has a little different flavor. In making true Greek yogurt, the liquid whey has been strained out 3 times instead of 2, as in regular yogurt. Plain Greek yogurt has less sodium, potassium, carbohydrates, sugars, and calcium than plain regular yogurt. It has more protein and also more fat, unless you buy non-fat. Regular yogurt will curdle in cooking, but true Greek yogurt will not. Some yogurt referred to as Greek yogurt is only mimicking the real thing by adding cornstarch or concentrated protein to thicken it. There are many flavors of both regular and Greek yogurt. Either kind can be natural, having only a few basic ingredients, or not so natural, having many additives. (Remember that the patient may not be able to tolerate chunks of fruit.) If you're watching your budget, in some cases money can be saved by buying a large container of plain yogurt and adding your own flavors, as below:

- 1/2 cup plain yogurt

- 1 teaspoon honey, agave syrup, or sugar

One of the following:

- 1/2 of a banana, mashed (optional sprinkle of cinnamon)

- 2 tablespoons smooth jelly

- 2 teaspoons lemon juice (or 1/4 teaspoon True Lemon crystals plus 1 teaspoon water)

- 2 teaspoons orange juice (or 1 teaspoon orange juice concentrate)

- Fruit cocktail cup with maraschino cherries, drained and pureed

- 1 tablespoon chocolate syrup (optional sprinkle of cinnamon)

- 1/8 cup pureed berries (Tip: Make a bigger batch of pureed berries and freeze it in an ice cube tray.

Take out a couple of cubes and defrost when needed.)

A healthful smoothie could be made by pureeing berries and adding banana and yogurt.

Try making a cream pie filling without putting it in a crust.

A little ice cream with no chunks is easily eaten by someone with chewing or swallowing difficulty. However, if the patient is required to drink only thickened drinks, **foods that melt in the mouth may be restricted**. If the patient can have ice cream, alternating bites of ice cream with other food can help keep a sleepy patient more alert while eating.

Cakes and cookies can be "slurried" by dissolving 1 tablespoon of plain gelatin in 2 cups of liquid or 1 tablespoon of commercial thickener in 1/2 cup of liquid. (Commercial thickener, such as Thick It or Thick and Easy, can usually be found close to the nutrition supplement drinks in a store like Walgreen's or Rite Aid.) Pour enough liquid over the cake or cookie to saturate it well and let it sit for at least 15 minutes. Flavored gelatin on a white cake can be very tasty. Top it with a dollop of whipped cream if you want to "dress it up" (if two different textures can be tolerated by the person with swallowing difficulty).

Notes:

HELP WITH BEVERAGES

These ideas are only suggestions. Each suggestion must be evaluated, based upon the individual's ability to chew and/or swallow. When in doubt, consult a doctor or swallow therapist.

Helping the patient keep hydrated is not always easy but very important. Electrolytes are minerals that carry electric charges and help maintain fluid balance and hydration. Sodium, potassium, calcium, chloride and magnesium are electrolytes. Some foods that contain potassium are spinach, kale, peas, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, bananas, kiwi, apricots, melons, oranges, lemons, and prunes. Some foods that contain calcium are milk products, meat, eggs, and fish that have bones. Some foods with magnesium are cereal and beans.

Some good drinks for electrolytes would be almond milk or cashew milk, orange juice, and especially coconut water.

If you have a juicer, you could make one of these combinations good for hydration:

Option 1

4 carrots
1/2 of a cantaloupe
3 celery sticks

Option 2

3 apples
1/2 lemon
6 celery sticks

SOME PATIENTS WITH SWALLOWING PROBLEMS ARE ADVISED TO DRINK ONLY THICKENED LIQUIDS. They are usually thickened with commercial thickeners, such as Thick It or Thick and Easy, which can usually be found at a store such as Walgreen's or Rite Aid, in the section that has nutrition supplement drinks.

There are 3 thicknesses designated—nectar thickness, honey thickness, and spoon (pudding) thickness.

Some drinks that are already nectar thickness are apricot nectar and eggnog.

Perhaps you can come up with some other ideas for naturally thick drinks by pureeing different types of fruits or vegetables.

Diarrhea is a major cause of dehydration. There are some foods that are recommended to be helpful for diarrhea. For those with chewing and/or swallowing difficulty, mashed bananas, applesauce, mashed white potatoes (using water rather than milk), and mashed sweet potatoes should be helpful. Oatmeal is also thought to be a help. For variety, you could mix bananas and applesauce, oatmeal and applesauce, or oatmeal and bananas. Black tea and honey are both said to be good for diarrhea, so you could serve black tea sweetened with honey (thickened, if necessary). These options may not be advisable for persons with diabetes, except for the oatmeal. Perhaps for some diabetics it would be acceptable to add small amounts of banana or applesauce to the oatmeal alternately to change the flavor of the oatmeal slightly and provide some variety.

Notes:

YOUR IDEAS:

*Best wishes to you as you prepare food for someone in your life who has difficulty
chewing or swallowing.*

JoAnne