Chewing and swallowing problems
Ngā uaua o te horomia

Dietetics and Nutrition Service

This advice is for people who have chewing or swallowing difficulties. It may be due to problems or pain with chewing, moving food around your mouth, or swallowing. **If a speech-language therapist is part of your team, follow their advice first.**

Try these ideas

Start with softer foods that are easier to chew and swallow. See ideas on the next page.

If it's still painful or difficult, try mashed foods and smoothies.

Add extra sauce to meals so the food slides down more easily. Serve hot meals with gravy, white, or cheese sauce.

Add mayonnaise or hummus to sandwiches.

Add plain yoghurt or sour cream to vegetables.

Serve meals with olive oil, pesto, peanut, or teriyaki sauce.

Cut meat into small pieces and cook until tender for less chewing.

If this is still too tough, mash or blend your food. Try fish, mince, mild curries, or stews.

These foods may be too hard or painful to eat

Avoid salty, acidic, or spicy foods that may sting your mouth. These include pineapple, kiwifruit, citrus, tomatoes, and chilli dishes.

Avoid very hot foods and drinks.

Icy cold food and drinks can be soothing for some and painful for others.

Avoid crunchy, dry, or rough foods such as nuts, chips, and hard toast.

Date published: October 2025 **Review date:** October 2028
Approved by: National Nutrition Information Sheet Rōpū

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Keep up with mouth care

If you wear dentures, check that they fit well.

Rinse dentures after eating. Brush your dentures daily with a soft toothbrush and cleaner.

Soak overnight in denture solution.

Clean your teeth with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.

Rinse your mouth with a salt-and-baking-soda mouthwash after each meal, or more often if needed.

Mouthwash recipe:

1. Mix ½ tsp baking soda and ½ tsp salt in a full glass of water.
2. Throw out any remaining mouthwash at the end of the day.

If your mouth or throat is too sore to chew and swallow, pain relief may help. Discuss this with your doctor.

Meal ideas for chewing problems

Breakfast ideas

- Porridge or bircher muesli
- Scrambled eggs
- Pancakes/panikeke with yoghurt
- Congee/juk (rice porridge)
- Khichdi (rice and lentil porridge)
- Suafa'i/vai siaine (banana and coconut pudding)
- Upma/uppittu (semolina dish)
- Idli (rice cakes) or dosa with chutney

Lunch ideas

- Pasta with creamy sauce
- Soup
- Boil up or hot pot
- Ramen or noodles
- Dhal or kadhi (curry) with rice
- Minced chicken with gravy
- Sapa sui/chop suey
- Dumplings
- Risotto
- Pasta, egg, seafood, or potato salad

Dinner ideas

- Steamed or poached fish with white sauce
- Beef or pork casserole
- Mashed potatoes or kūmara with steamed vegetables
- Cottage or fish pie
- Beef Stroganoff
- Lū pulu/palusami (coconut cream, greens, and meat)

Snack ideas

- Soft, stewed/canned fruits
- Yoghurt, custard
- Rice pudding, milk puddings
- Smoothies
- Soft bread with hummus, avocado, or cream cheese and jam

If you are losing weight or your swallowing problems worsen, speak with your doctor. You may need to see a dietitian and a speech-language therapist.

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