**Soft Food Diet**



When people think of a soft food diet, they often imagine endless days of Jell-o and bullion. However, it is possible to eat a well-balanced diet of soft foods with flavor and variety. With a little creativity and planning, there is no need for soft foods to be boring or lacking in nutrition.

Why a Soft Food Diet?

This type of diet is frequently prescribed following surgery or dental procedures. There are many reasons that a medical professional may prescribe soft foods for a period. Soft foods are extremely easy to chew and swallow. Sometimes, a soft food diet is prescribed in a progression following a [clear liquid diet](http://diet.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Clear_Liquid_Diet). It is important to note that a soft diet is NOT the same thing as a [bland diet](http://diet.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Bland_Diet_Menu).

 Which Foods Can I Eat?

A large number of foods qualify as soft foods:

* Mush or porridge-type hot cereals like oatmeal, grits and Cream-of-Wheat
* Cereals that soften easily in milk like Rice Krispies and Corn Flakes
* Soft breads and muffins
* Pasta cooked to a soft consistency
* Potatoes and sweet potatoes without skin
* Soft fruits like ripe bananas and melon
* Pureed berries put through a strainer to remove skins and seeds
* Cooked fruits without seeds or skins like apples and pears
* Fruit juice
* Avocados
* Vegetable juice
* Skinless vegetables that cook to a soft consistency or can be mashed, like carrots, cauliflower
* Soft fish carefully de-boned
* Canned tuna or chicken
* Scrambled or soft-boiled eggs
* Tender meats and ground meats that have been well-cooked - braised meats or meats cooked in a crock-pot are especially good for this purpose
* Tofu
* Well-cooked legumes with soft skins like baked beans
* Pureed or blended soups
* Pureed or blended sauces
* Yogurt
* Cottage cheese or ricotta cheese
* Finely grated/melted cheese
* Ice cream
* Pudding or custard
* Protein powders

Which Foods Should I Avoid?

You should avoid any foods that require a moderate to a large amount of effort to chew and swallow when you are eating a diet of soft foods. Some of these foods include the following:

* Chewy breads, especially those with whole seeds or grains and raisins
* Bagels
* English muffins
* Crusty breads such as sourdough
* Chips and crisps
* Popcorn
* Corn and peas
* Legumes with noticeable tough skins - like black beans or kidney beans
* Hard cereals
* Rice
* Raw vegetables and cooked vegetables that can't be easily mashed
* Dried fruits
* Fruits with seeds
* Pineapple
* Raw apples
* Fruit skin
* Tough meats or stringy meats
* Meat products in a casing like hot dogs and bratwurst
* Meats that take some chewing, like chicken breasts and steak
* Sliced or cubed cheese

Soft, but Still Tasty and Nutritious

It is possible to eat a healthy, flavorful and well-balanced diet when you are eating only soft foods. By following the guidelines above and using a little creativity, you can keep your food interesting and your body healthy.

Sample Menus

Many people think that being limited to soft food is restrictive, but you really can eat well while you're on this diet. Here are some sample menus that show the kinds of wonderful choices you have.

Breakfast

1. Scrambled eggs with grated, melted cheese, cantaloupe
2. Soft boiled egg, yogurt with strained pureed berries
3. Breakfast smoothie made with milk, banana, cocoa powder, yogurt, a little sweetener or sugar and protein powder

Lunch

1. Tuna salad made with tuna, mayonnaise and some spices, applesauce
2. Egg salad made with chopped up hard-boiled eggs, mayo and spices, melon salad
3. Pureed split pea soup, poached pears
4. Deli turkey rolls made with very thin deli-sliced turkey rolled around avocado slices

Dinner

1. Pasta marinara with canned chicken
2. Poached salmon, mashed or baked skinless sweet potato
3. Spinach quiche, mashed cauliflower (Cook cauliflower to soft and mash with butter, milk, salt and pepper.)

Snacks and Desserts

* Pound cake with strained seedless berry puree
* Pudding cups with whipped cream
* Ice cream with chocolate sauce
* Cottage cheese with fruit

Maintaining Adequate Nutrition

It is important that while on a soft foods diet, you maintain healthy nutrition by eating in accordance with the [USDA-recommended food pyramid](http://diet.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Food_Pyramid). This includes eating across a variety of food groups including fruits and vegetables, proteins, grains and dairy products.

Keep the following tips in mind:

* Avoid high-sugar foods, especially those that have little or no nutritive value - such as Jell-o.
* Eat colorful foods to ensure adequate vitamin intake. The wider range of natural colors that your food has, the more nutrient groups you are including in your diet.
* Eat at least 1200 calories per day. Anything below this can lead to muscle loss.
* Keep an eye on your fat intake. Just because you are on soft food doesn't mean that you have free-reign to up your fat intake. To keep your fat in check, select lower fat dairy products and use chicken or beef stock to flavor your purees.