

What is a ground diet?

A ground diet has foods that are moist and soft. It includes 2 types of foods:

- Foods that are ground with a sauce like ground turkey with gravy
- Foods that can be easily mashed with a spoon or fork like very soft, cooked carrots

Make sure that all foods you feed your child are very easy to chew OR mash with their tongue or a fork.

Why does my child need it?

Children who have trouble chewing or swallowing often need a ground diet. It can help:

- Decrease the risk of food going into your child's windpipe (trachea). This helps prevent your child from choking.
- Your child eat more easily and safely if they are not able to:
 - Chew food well.
 - Move food from their tongue to their teeth.

How do I prepare ground foods?

Some foods we eat already have a ground consistency. This includes foods like sloppy Joe meat, cottage cheese and scrambled eggs. Other times, you will need to prepare foods so your child can eat them.

To prepare ground foods for your child:

- Wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Gather your supplies. This may include a:
 - Food processor or cutting board
 - Knife, spoon or fork
 - Plate or bowl
- To ground some foods, you can add them to a food processor.
 - Add some liquid or sauce to keep the food moist and well-formed.
 - This is good to do when preparing foods like chicken salad, ground turkey with gravy or egg salad.
 - Avoid using tough meats.
- If you do not have a food processor, mince or dice foods into small pieces with a knife or chopper.
 - Add a small amount of liquid or sauce to keep the food moist and well-formed.
 - This is good to do when preparing foods like soft, cooked carrots or moist meatballs.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Ground diet, continued

What foods and drinks can my child have?

Some foods and drinks that your child may and may not be allowed to have are listed in the chart on pages 2 to 4. Your child’s feeding therapist or doctor can give you specific information about your child’s special needs.

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
Milk and other drinks	If your child may have liquids, they must be the thickness advised by your feeding therapist or doctor – thin, nectar or honey. Your child’s feeding therapist or doctor can advise you.	As advised by your child’s feeding therapist or doctor
Meats and meat substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moist, ground meats • Moist meatloaf • Chicken, egg or tuna salad • Sloppy Joe meat • Moist meatballs • Poached eggs • Soft tofu • Cottage cheese • Smooth quiche without lumps or crust • Soft, moist lasagna • Tuna-noodle casserole • Soufflés, which can have small pieces in it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole meats, fish or poultry • Peanut butter • Hot dogs • Bacon • Sandwiches • Pizza • Cheese slices and cubes
Breads and cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All hot cereals, such as oatmeal, Cream of Wheat and grits • Pancakes, well-moistened with syrup • Rice cereal • Biscuits, well-moistened with gravy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread • Bagels • English muffins • Pizza • Breadsticks • French bread • All dry cereals • Crackers

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Ground diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
Starches and potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-cooked pasta in sauce • Casseroles without rice • Well-cooked, moistened boiled, baked or mashed potatoes • Soft dumplings, well-moistened with butter or gravy • Stuffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice • Granola • Dry casseroles or casseroles with rice or large chunks • Potato skins • Potato chips • Rice • Crunchy or hard French fries
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft, drained fruits – either canned or well-cooked without seeds or skin • Applesauce • Fresh soft or ripe banana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruits • Raw fruit • Grapes • Raisins • Fresh, canned or cooked pineapple
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft, drained, fork-tender vegetables, such as canned or well-cooked fresh vegetables. Pieces should be less than one-half (1/2) inch. • Refried and baked beans • Ripe, soft avocado • Salsa and guacamole without large chunks • Creamed spinach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw vegetables • Corn, including creamed corn • Salads • Peas
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All strained cream or broth-based soups. Pieces in soups should be less than one-half (1/2) inch. • Soup liquid must be the thickness advised by your child’s feeding therapist or doctor • Chili 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soups with large chunks of meats and vegetables • Soups with rice, corn or peas • Chicken noodle soup • Beef stew

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Ground diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed	Foods not allowed
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pudding, such as banana, vanilla or chocolate • Custard • Smooth yogurt • Soufflé • Cheesecake without crust • Soft cookies dunked in milk • Soft fruit pie filling • Soft, moist cakes with icing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard or chewy cookies • Dry, coarse cakes • Anything with nuts, seeds, coconut, pineapple or dried fruits • Candy • Chewing gum • Yogurt with chunks of fruit • The following items are thin liquids. Your child may not have them if they are not allowed to have thin liquids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frozen malts – Milk shakes – Frozen yogurt – Ice cream – Jell-O – Any other foods that get watery at room temperature

What else do I need to know?

- Use gravies or sauces to add flavor and increase moisture of foods.
- Thicken all liquids as advised by your child’s feeding therapist or doctor.
- Follow all other advice given by your child’s feeding therapist or doctor.

Who should I call if I have questions about my child’s diet?

Call your child’s feeding therapist or doctor if you have any questions.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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