

Date: 22/12/2014

Dear Sir/Madam

This is a follow up response relating to parents whose babies have feeding problems.

**Please find our response below:**

**Response from The Children's Integrated Speech and Language Therapy Service for Hackney & the City.  
Information supplied by Katy Ahern, Clinical Lead Speech and Language Therapist: Eating, Drinking and Swallowing.**

***Does the trust issue nutritional information to parents whose babies have feeding problems – ie problems eating lumpy foods – and/or whose babies struggle to gain weight?***

The Children's Integrated Speech and Language Therapy Service for Hackney & the City assesses and provides intervention and advice for babies, children, and young people with delayed oral motor skills that affect feeding development, those with swallowing difficulties at risk of aspiration (fluid or food entering the airway) and those with acquired or congenital syndromes or disabilities that place them at risk of swallowing difficulties.

Specialist Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) trained in Dysphagia (swallowing difficulties) work in Homerton Hospital's Neonatal Unit and in the community across early year's settings, schools, colleges and family homes. We work closely with each child's family and other members of the multi-disciplinary team e.g. Dietician, Community Nurse, Paediatrician, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Health Visitor, Clinical Psychologist and school staff.

There are some babies/children who have difficulties moving from puree to lumpy foods and/or are not gaining weight and are not at risk of swallowing difficulties. The lead professionals for these babies/children are often the Dietician and/or the Clinical Psychologist who may provide advice around nutrition, hydration, weight gain and family mealtime support.

**What is this information?**

The SLT conducts out a thorough clinical swallowing assessment, reviews any objective assessments such as a Videofluoroscopy swallow study that may have been carried out, and liaises with the multi-disciplinary team (including the child's family). Following the assessment, the SLT provides advice as to the safest fluid consistency and food texture as one element of a therapy programme for the child.

*Incorporating hospital and community health services, teaching and research*

The purpose of recommending a specific food texture is to maintain or improve the health of a baby/child by reducing the risk of aspiration and long term associated health conditions.

**Does the trust advise different foods in lists described as “bite and dissolve”, “bite and squash/suck” and “easy chew food suggestions”?**

The descriptions we use are listed below.

**What foods appear on these lists?**

#### Standard Puree

Examples of food that can be pureed include:

Ready brek, weetabix, porridge,

Well-cooked root vegetables; carrots, sweet potatoes, yam, parsnip, plantain, potato

Soft well cooked meat e.g. chicken

Sponge puddings with custard

Well cooked rice with sauce

Soft fruits; avocado, banana

Stewed fruit; apples, pears

We may also recommend

Thick smooth puree or Thin runny puree depending on oral-motor feeding skills

#### Dissolving

For children with swallowing difficulties or who are at risk of swallowing difficulties due to limited/delayed oral motor skills, the aim of bite and dissolve foods is to enable the child to practise and develop oral motor skills needed for safe feeding rather than for nutritional intake. They are unlikely to have more than a few individual pieces in each practise session (and they are highly unlikely to have a whole packet).

Examples of dissolving foods include:

Prawn Crackers; Pom Bears; Skips, Wotsits, Quavers; Cheese Straws

Healthier options: Organix carrot Stix; Golden Sweetcorn rings; Cheese & herb puffs.

Typical guidance on our information includes the statement: Most of these foods are available in big supermarkets. They should only be used as snacks and to encourage the development of oral feeding skills, not as part of a main meal. Where possible, try to find the “no added sugar/ reduced salt or sugar” versions to protect your child’s teeth.

#### Mashed:

Examples include:

Mashed avocado; mashed banana: sweet potato mash; steamed fish, scrambled egg, ready brek, porridge, well cooked and mashed root vegetables; carrots, sweet

potatoes, yam, parsnip, plantain, potato. Well-cooked dhal, lentils, pasta, very ripe fruit: banana, pear, peach.

#### Soft Chew:

Examples include:

Weetos (well-soaked with extra milk drained off)

Crustless toast (buttered when hot so butter melts)

Banana pieces, spaghetti hoops; corned beef; apple cake and custard

Fromage frais; Lightly grilled tofu

Pieces of well-cooked carrot; Skinned broad beans; Pieces of ripe fruit

Small pieces of slow-cooked tender meats or fish, fish fingers, corned beef and pre-packed slices of ham/ chicken/ turkey

#### Chewable

Examples Include:

Soft cereal in milk, toast with soft topping, breadsticks, chopped adult meal, halved grapes/raisins.

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Yours sincerely

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