

# Types of Therapeutic Diets

A therapeutic diet is a meal plan that controls the intake of certain foods or nutrients. It is part of the treatment of a medical condition and are normally prescribed by a physician and planned by a dietician. A therapeutic diet is usually a modification of a regular diet. It is modified or tailored to fit the nutrition needs of a particular person.

Therapeutic diets are modified for (1) nutrients, (2) texture, and/or (3) food allergies or food intolerances.

## **Common reasons therapeutic diets may be ordered:**

- To maintain nutritional status
- To restore nutritional status
- To correct nutritional status
- To decrease calories for weight control
- To provide extra calories for weight gain
- To balance amounts of carbohydrates, fat and protein for control of diabetes
- To provide a greater amount of a nutrient such as protein
- To decrease the amount of a nutrient such as sodium
- To exclude foods due to allergies or food intolerance
- To provide texture modifications due to problems with chewing and/or swallowing

## **Common therapeutic diets include:**

### **1. Nutrient modifications**

- No concentrated sweets diet
- Diabetic diets
- No added salt diet
- Low sodium diet
- Low fat diet and/or low cholesterol diet
- High fiber diet
- Renal diet

### **2. Texture modification**

- Mechanical soft diet
- Puree diet

### **3. Food allergy or food intolerance modification**

- Food allergy
- Food intolerance

### **4. Tube feedings**

- Liquid tube feedings in place of meals
- Liquid tube feedings in addition to meals

### **5. Additional feedings** – In addition to meal, extra nutrition may be ordered as:

- Supplements – usually ordered as liquid nutritional shakes once, twice or three times per day; given either with meals or between meals
- Nourishments – ordered as a snack food or beverage items to be given between meals mid-morning and/or mid-afternoon
- HS snack – ordered as a snack food or beverage items to be given at the hour of sleep

### **The following list includes brief descriptions of common therapeutic diets:**

#### **Clear liquid diet –**

- Includes minimum residue fluids that can be seen through.
- Examples are juices without pulp, broth, and Jell-O.
- Is often used as the first step to restarting oral feeding after surgery or an abdominal procedure.
- Can also be used for fluid and electrolyte replacement in people with severe diarrhea.
- Should not be used for an extended period as it does not provide enough calories and nutrients.

#### **Full liquid diet –**

- Includes fluids that are creamy.
- Some examples of food allowed are ice cream, pudding, thinned hot cereal, custard, strained cream soups, and juices with pulp.
- Used as the second step to restarting oral feeding once clear liquids are tolerated.
- Used for people who cannot tolerate a mechanical soft diet.
- Should not be used for extended periods.

**No Concentrated Sweets (NCS) diet –**

- Is considered a liberalized diet for diabetics when their weight and blood sugar levels are under control.
- It includes regular foods without the addition of sugar.
- Calories are not counted as in ADA calorie controlled diets.

**Diabetic or calorie controlled diet (ADA) –**

- These diets control calories, carbohydrates, protein, and fat intake in balanced amounts to meet nutritional needs, control blood sugar levels, and control weight.
- Portion control is used at mealtimes as outlined in the ADA “Exchange List for Meal Planning.”
- Most commonly used calorie levels are: 1,200, 1,500, 1,800 and 2,000.

**No Added Salt (NAS) diet –**

- Is a regular diet with no salt packet on the tray.
- Food is seasoned as regular food.

**Low Sodium (LS) diet –**

- May also be called a 2 gram Sodium Diet.
- Limits salt and salty foods such as bacon, sausage, cured meats, canned soups, salty seasonings, pickled foods, salted crackers, etc.
- Is used for people who may be “holding water” (edema) or who have high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, or first stages of kidney disease.

**Low fat/low cholesterol diet –**

- Is used to reduce fat levels and/or treat medical conditions that interfere with how the body uses fat such as diseases of the liver, gallbladder, or pancreas.
- Limits fat to 50 grams or no more than 30% calories derived from fat.
- Is low in total fat and saturated fats and contains approximately 250-300 mg cholesterol.

**High fiber diet –**

- Is prescribed in the prevention or treatment of a number of gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and metabolic diseases.
- Increased fiber should come from a variety of sources including fruits, legumes, vegetables, whole breads, and cereals.

### **Renal diet –**

- Is for renal/kidney people.
- The diet plan is individualized depending on if the person is on dialysis.
- The diet restricts sodium, potassium, fluid, and protein specified levels.
- Lab work is followed closely.

### **Mechanically altered or soft diet –**

- Is used when there are problems with chewing and swallowing.
- Changes the consistency of the regular diet to a softer texture.
- Includes chopped or ground meats as well as chopped or ground raw fruits and vegetables.
- Is for people with poor dental conditions, missing teeth, no teeth, or a condition known as dysphasia.

### **Pureed diet –**

- Changes the regular diet by pureeing it to a smooth liquid consistency.
- Indicated for those with wired jaws extremely poor dentition in which chewing is inadequate.
- Often thinned down so it can pass through a straw.
- Is for people with chewing or swallowing difficulties or with the condition of dysphasia.
- Foods should be pureed separately.
- Avoid nuts, seeds, raw vegetables, and raw fruits.
- Is nutritionally adequate when offering all food groups.

### **Food allergy modification –**

- Food allergies are due to an abnormal immune response to an otherwise harmless food.
- Foods implicated with allergies are strictly eliminated from the diet.
- Appropriate substitutions are made to ensure the meal is adequate.
- The most common food allergens are milk, egg, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.
- A gluten free diet would include the elimination of wheat, rye, and barley. Replaced with potato, corn, and rice products.

### **Food intolerance modification –**

- The most common food intolerance is intolerance to lactose (milk sugar) because of a decreased amount of an enzyme in the body.
- Other common types of food intolerance include adverse reactions to certain products added to food to enhance taste, color, or protect against bacterial growth.

- Common symptoms involving food intolerances are vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and headaches.

**Tube feedings –**

- Tube feedings are used for people who cannot take adequate food or fluids by mouth.
- All or parts of nutritional needs are met through tube feedings.
- Some people may receive food by mouth if they can swallow safely and are working to be weaned off the tube feeding.