



COMER  
CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL  
THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO

## Food Guidelines by Age

### **INFANT FORMULAS & FOOD:**

A child under the age of 1 year will receive infant formula specific to their medical and nutritional needs, in order to support continued growth. For children less than 1 year of age; foods are pureed or Stage I, II, or III baby foods.

### **TODDLER AGES 1-2 YEARS:**

Easy to chew foods, finger foods and cut-up portions; avoids foods that may cause choking, such as uncut hot dogs, grapes and raisins.

### **TODDLER AGES 3-4 YEARS:**

Easy to chew foods, finger foods and cut-up portions

### **SCHOOL-AGE (AGES 5-11 YEARS):**

All foods allowed, with calories, protein and portion sizes aimed at the school age child.

### **ADOLESCENT (AGES 12 + YEARS):**

All foods allowed, with larger portions than school age menu aimed at the growing teen.

## Helpful Food Definitions Commonly Used at the Hospital

During your child's hospital stay, the doctor will decide what your child can eat. Your child's diet may change several times depending on their medical condition, surgery, or specific tests that have been ordered. *(For further review of these diets, ask to see the dietitian)*

### **NPO:**

This means "nothing by mouth." Your child **may not** have anything to eat or drink. This diet may be ordered if your child is having tests or surgery, or if they are having difficulty with food or fluids.

### **MECHANICAL SOFT:**

This diet includes ground meats and cooked or canned fruits and vegetables to make chewing and swallowing easier.

**PUREED:**

All foods are whipped in a blender to make them smooth. Foods may be molded into shapes to resemble normal foods. Pureed foods may be used if your child has trouble chewing and/or swallowing and cannot handle a mechanical soft diet.

**THICKENED LIQUIDS:**

This diet includes liquids which may be changed in either thickness or texture. Your child may need to have liquids that are as thick as honey or nectar. Rice cereal is often used as a thickener in infant formulas.

**CLEAR LIQUID:**

This diet provides liquids that leave little or no residue in the intestinal tract after digestion. It is used prior to and after certain tests or surgery. It may be ordered if your child is having nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. This diet includes: clear broth, gelatin, juice (apple, grape, orange, and cranberry), Italian ice and popsicles, clear soda pop, clear liquid supplement. Sometimes carbonated beverages are not allowed.

**RENAL OR DIALYSIS:**

This diet helps to limit the amount of waste products in your child's blood because of their kidney function. Their meals may be limited in sodium (salt) and potassium based on their kidney function.

**DIABETIC or CONSISTENT CARBOHYDRATE:**

This diet helps to control the amount of sugar and starchy foods (milk, fruits, breads and cereals, etc) they receive at each meal and snack. This is designed to help your child keep their blood sugar level under control.

**LOW FAT:**

This diet limits foods that are higher in fat. It is usually for children with a heart condition.

**LOW SODIUM/LOW SALT:**

This diet limits salt during cooking and does not allow added salt or high sodium foods. A low sodium diet is helpful in controlling high blood pressure or if your child is retaining water. It is often ordered for children with diseases of the heart, lung, or kidney. How much salt or sodium your child can have depends on their medical condition.

**LOW RESIDUE:**

This diet provides foods that are low in fiber, lightly seasoned and easy to chew and digest. It is often used if your child is having gastrointestinal (stomach or bowel) discomfort or until they are able to tolerate a wider variety of foods. Their diet will limit raw fruits and vegetables, seeds, nuts and higher fiber breads and cereals.

**TUBE FEEDING:**

If your child is unable to eat anything, they may be placed on a special liquid feeding that is fed through a tube into their stomach or intestine. This feeding will provide all the nutrients that your child's body needs. Your child may receive both meals and a tube feeding to encourage them to eat while still providing adequate calories.