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5 Star Services for Aged Care, Childcare & Retirement Living

Preparing Bread for people with Dysphagia

By OSCAR Care Group Lead Speech Pathologist Delaney Sadler & Lead Dietitian Ella Monaghan



November the 17th is home-made bread day. Why wouldn't we want to celebrate something as delicious as bread?! People around the world eat bread & it is a staple food for many cultures. During extended lockdowns baking home-made bread has become a tasty hobby for many.

Unfortunately, not everyone is able to eat bread safely. For some people eating & drinking can be an uncomfortable or unsafe experience due to difficulty swallowing. Swallowing refers to the way we suck, chew, bite, prepare & swallow our foods & fluids.

When someone has difficulty swallowing it is termed **dysphagia**. Dysphagia can lead to malnutrition, dehydration, weight loss, chest infections or choking as well as impact emotional & social areas of life. Bread is a particularly difficult food to swallow & people with dysphagia are often recommended to avoid bread.

Nutrition and Bread

Bread is defined as a carbohydrate and is a core food group as per the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, which encourages Australians to consume a variety of foods from the five core food group.

Individuals aged between 51 – 70 years of age are recommended to consume between 4 – 6 serves of wholegrain carbohydrates per day.

Example of 'a serve' includes

- 1 slice of bread
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or porridge
- ¼ cup muesli
- 1 English muffin or crumpet



Consuming Carbohydrates for those with Dysphagia

Carbohydrates such as bread play an important role in the body in order to provide our body with sufficient energy to conduct activities and for bodily processes such as breathing, sleeping, resting and eating. When we consume carbohydrates such as bread, our body breaks down the carbohydrate into sugar (glucose) into our blood stream. The glucose is then able to move into our cells which can be used for vital cell processes and energy.

Evidence indicates that consuming wholegrain varieties of carbohydrates such as wholemeal bread can reduce the risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. Wholegrain varieties contain greater quantities of fibre which is positive as fibre allows you to remain fuller for longer, stabilises blood sugar level and improves bowel regularity.

Why is bread not recommended for someone with Dysphagia?

Many people with dysphagia are suggested a modified diet and/or thickened fluids to increase their safety when swallowing. These recommendations are made using the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) framework, which recommends avoiding bread.

Below are the reasons that bread is not recommended for residents with dysphagia:

- The risk of choking is 7 times higher for people over the age of 65
- Up to 50% of residents residing in Aged Care Facilities have chewing and swallowing problems
- Choking is the second highest cause of preventable death in these facilities
- Coroners reports consistently show that bread is a high choking risk
- Bread turns into a sticky ball in the mouth and throat and can easily become lodged in the airway



How can bread be prepared safely for an individual with Dysphagia?

Fortunately, there is a bread alternative for people on modified diets to allow them to safely eat bread called Gelled Bread.

What do you need to make Gelled Bread?

- Food Processor
- Mould
- Bread (NOT breadcrumbs)
- Liquid (water, milk, stock etc)
- Filling for sandwich (ensure this is compliant with the modified diet according to IDDSI)

How do you make Gelled Bread?

1. Remove the crusts from some slices of bread (2 slices per sandwich you are making)
2. Process the bread up into 4mm pieces using a food processor
3. Scoop the equivalent of 1 slice of bread into a mould
4. Spray the breadcrumbs with a liquid (water, milk, stock)
5. You can now add a filling (complying with IDDSI recommendation) if you wish to make a sandwich and repeat steps 3 and 4 on top of the filling
6. Once you have made the bread/sandwich cover with cling wrap and place in the fridge for at least an hour
7. The bread or sandwich is ready to eat

Video: How to prepare Gelled Bread



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Summary

- Bread is a preferred food for many but unfortunately not all people can eat bread safely.
- Bread is a form of carbohydrate and is broken down in the body into sugar (glucose) which is used by our body for energy in order to perform cellular processes and to give us energy to engage in activity and movement. It is recommended that wholegrain varieties such as wholemeal bread are consumed, instead of highly processed options such as white bread.
- Gelled bread is a safe bread alternative for people with dysphagia.



Do you need further information about assisting someone with Dysphagia?

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Please call or email our Allied Health professionals via the contact details below.



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