

## **MECHANICALLY ALTERED MEALS**

SourcePoint offers three types of mechanically altered meals: chopped, ground, and pureed. Selected kitchen staff are trained in the proper techniques of meal alteration to ensure client safety.

Mechanically altered meals are required of individuals who have difficulty chewing or swallowing due to medical conditions such as stroke, head injury, dementia, oral health issues (missing teeth), or post-surgery recovery. These meals are processed to be soft and easy to chew, reducing the risk of choking or aspiration (food entering the lungs) while eating.

Not all components of a meal require alteration if the food is soft enough and cut into the required size. This allows the food to remain visibly appealing, encouraging the individual to consume all aspects of the meal. Typically, individuals requiring mechanically altered meals are medically compromised and nutritious foods are vital to their continued health.

Chopped meals have meat cut into bite-sized pieces, unless it is soft enough to cut with a spoon, such as fish or meatloaf. All raw vegetables are excluded unless they can be minced and mixed into other foods. Side dishes do not require alteration unless they are not soft enough to eat whole. Pasta dishes that usually feature long noodles, such as spaghetti, are changed to a bite-sized noodle.

There are some restrictions that prevent certain foods from being included in ground meals. Restricted foods include corn, nuts, dried fruits, dried seeds,

coconut, difficult to chew fresh fruits (apples, pears, pineapple, grapes, or mango), and all raw vegetables, except for shredded lettuce. Should any of these items be included in the client's selected meal choice, substitutions are made to ensure the client's safety.

Ground meals have meat ground down and moistened using gravy, sauces, or mayonnaise. This technique allows the use of buns or soft bread to still be used as the meat will remain in place between the bread. If the scheduled side dishes are not naturally soft enough or contain restricted foods, substitutions are made with appropriate foods. If pasta is included in the meal, longer noodles will be replaced with bite-sized noodles.

Pureed meals require that all food is ground to a soft, smooth consistency, similar to applesauce. Substitutions are made for foods that do not puree to the correct consistency.

Each meal is labeled with color-coordinated labels specific to its alteration for easy identification by delivery drivers. It is imperative that drivers confirm that the correct meal type is given to each client to ensure their safety, as it could be life threatening otherwise.

Ultimately, our goal is to provide each client with nutritious, delicious, and visually appealing meals. It takes the entire Nutrition team of staff and volunteers to make this happen.