

Ileostomy Diet Guidelines

An ileostomy is a surgical opening in the abdomen in which a part of the small intestine (ileum) is brought to the skin surface. The opening in the ileum at the skin is called a stoma. The stoma becomes the exit for all stool and gas. It must be covered with an ileostomy bag to collect the output.

If you have any questions, ask your physician, nurse or dietitian.

Eating after an ileostomy

An ileostomy affects the way your body digests and absorbs nutrients. Follow the instructions in this handout to learn about the nutrition you need and how to help prevent diarrhea, high stool output, unpleasant odors, gas, or an ileostomy blockage.

General guidelines

- Follow a low-fiber diet for at least 6 weeks after your surgery (Table 3). Foods that are high in fiber are harder to digest and can increase your chances of having unpleasant symptoms.
- Eat small amounts of food every 2 to 4 hours (4 to 6 small meals or snacks daily instead of 3 large meals).
- Try not to eat large amounts of food in the evening. This can help decrease your stool output throughout the night. Eat your largest meal during the middle of the day.

What you can do

To prevent blockage

- Eat slowly and chew foods well.
- Limit fiber in your diet. Choose foods with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving.
- Eat only small amounts of foods that may cause blockages (Table 1).

To prevent diarrhea and high stool output

- Limit fiber in your diet. Choose foods with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving.
- Eat your meals on a similar schedule every day. Do not skip meals. This can cause your intestines to be more active, increasing gas and watery stool.
- Try not to drink fluids during meals and snacks and for 30 minutes after eating.
- Eat foods that help thicken your stool several times a day (Table 1).

- Try not to eat acidic, spicy, fried and greasy foods.
- Try not to drink beverages or foods high in sugar and artificial sweeteners.
- Dilute fruit juice or other sweet drinks by adding an equal amount of water.
- Try not to drink or eat beverages and foods containing sugar alcohols (erythritol, sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol).
- Limit caffeine and alcohol.
- If you feel unwell after eating dairy foods, try lactose-free dairy products.

To reduce gas and prevent unpleasant odors

Your body will release gas about 2 to 4 hours after eating gas-producing foods. To reduce gas and odor:

- Eat your meals on the same schedule every day. Do not skip meals. This can cause your intestines to be more active, increasing gas and watery stool.
- Stay away from chewing gum, drinking with straws, drinking carbonated beverages, smoking or chewing tobacco.
- Try not to eat too fast.

To prevent weight loss that does not happen on purpose

- Try eating high-calorie and high-protein snacks. Examples include:
 - 5 saltine crackers with 2 ounces of cheddar cheese (gives you about 290 calories and 15 grams of protein)
 - 4 graham cracker squares with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (gives you about 250 calories and 9 grams of protein)
- Try BOOST Glucose Control®, Ensure® High Protein, or Ensure® Max Protein shakes between meals. However, stay away from high-sugar supplements such as Ensure® Plus or BOOST Plus® because they may increase your ileostomy output.
- You may add protein powders to foods and beverages to add calories and protein.

To add vitamins and minerals to your diet

- Take a chewable (non-gummy) multivitamin with minerals 1 time a day for best absorption.
- Take a chewable or liquid calcium supplement. Liquid calcium citrate is best absorbed by your body. Take it with or without food.

To add foods back into your diet

- Starting 6 weeks after surgery, add 1 new fiber-rich food every few days to let your body get used to eating fiber. Start with foods that you were able to eat without problems before surgery.
- Some foods may cause symptoms such as gas, odor or diarrhea. Keep a list of foods that cause these symptoms. If a certain food gives you symptoms, do not eat it for 2 to 3 weeks. Then, try it again in small amounts to see how your body reacts.
- Be careful about eating foods that may cause blockages (Table 1).

Table 1. Food recommendations after your ileostomy

| | |
|--|--|
| Foods that may help thicken loose output | Applesauce, bananas, white rice, cheese, marshmallows, saltine crackers, tapioca, creamy peanut butter, skinless potatoes, pretzels, cream of wheat, pasta, white bread, yogurt |
| Foods that may cause diarrhea | Alcohol, apricots, beans, bran, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, chocolate, corn, fried foods, plums, soup, spicy foods, sugar-free gum, high-fat foods, high-sugar foods, licorice, dairy foods, nuts and seeds, peaches, peas, prunes, caffeinated drinks, fruit, fruit juice, sugar substitutes, tomatoes, raw leafy green vegetables, whole grains |
| Foods that can cause blockages | Unpeeled apples, bean sprouts, raw cabbage, sausage casing, celery, coconut, coleslaw, corn, cucumbers, dried fruit, grapes, green peppers, mushrooms, nuts, peas, pickles, pineapple, popcorn, relishes and olives, salad greens, seeds and nuts, spinach, vegetable and fruit skins, whole grains, tough meats |
| Foods and fluids that cause gas or odor | Alcohol, apples, asparagus, bananas, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carbonated beverages, beer, cauliflower, cheese, corn, cucumbers, dairy, dried beans and peas, eggs, fatty foods, fish, grapes, green peppers, melons, onions, peanuts, prunes, radishes, turnips |
| Foods that may lessen gas or odor | Buttermilk, yogurt, cranberry juice, parsley |
| Foods that may discolor stool | Beets, foods with red food dye, asparagus, broccoli, spinach |
| Foods that may help replace lost electrolytes (essential minerals your body needs) | Bananas, broths, potatoes, tomatoes, crackers, sports drinks, homemade rehydration drinks (Table 2) |

Dehydration

Dehydration can happen when your body loses more fluid than it is taking in. This can cause serious problems in your bodily functions.

If you have a lot of stool output from your ileostomy, if you are vomiting, or if you do not drink enough fluid, you may be at risk for dehydration.

Stoma output of more than 1 liter (or 1,000 milliliters) per day is high output. If this happens for more than 24 hours, do these:

- Do not eat foods that may be causing diarrhea (Table 1).
- Eat more foods that may help slow or thicken output (Table 1).
- Contact your clinician.

Symptoms of dehydration

- Thirst
- Dry mouth
- Decreased urine output
- Dark-colored urine
- Dizziness when standing up
- Fatigue
- Muscle or abdominal cramps

Keep well hydrated

You will probably need more fluids than most people, especially if you increase your activity or sweat.

Try these tips:

- Drink at least 8 to 10 cups of liquids per day.
- Sip on liquids throughout the day.
- Drink a glass of liquid whenever you empty your pouch.
- Try rehydration drinks, especially if you have high stool output.
Try the following drink mixes:
 - Pedialyte AdvancedCare® Plus
 - Ensure® Rapid Hydration
 - DripDrop® ORS
 - Ceralyte® 70
- Stay away from sport drinks with sugar or sugar-free sweeteners because these may increase your ileostomy output.
- Use the recipes in Table 2 to make your own rehydration drinks.

Table 2. Rehydration drink recipes

| Recipe 1 | Recipe 2 | Recipe 3 |
|---|---|--|
| 4 1/2 cups water 1/2 teaspoon salt 6 teaspoons sugar (Recipe from World Health Organization) | 3 cups water 1 cup orange juice 1/2 teaspoon baking soda 3/4 teaspoon salt | 2 cups Gatorade® 2 cups water 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| Recipe 4 | Recipe 5 | Recipe 6 |
| 4 cups Gatorade G2® 3/4 teaspoon salt | 1/2 cup grape or cranberry juice 3 1/2 cups water 1/2 teaspoon salt | 1 cup apple juice 3 cups water 1/2 teaspoon salt |

Table 3. Low-fiber diet after ileostomy

| Food Group | Foods to Choose | Foods to Avoid |
|----------------|--|--|
| Dairy Products | <i>Tip: Lactose-free products may be better tolerated.</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk, cream, buttermilk • Cheese, cottage cheese • Yogurt, kefir • Unsweetened plant-based milk alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheese containing seeds or nuts • Yogurt containing seeds, nuts or fruit skins • Ice cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet (high amounts of sugar may worsen diarrhea or cause high output) |
| Proteins | <i>Tip: Use a moist heating method for meats and poultry.</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very tender and well-cooked beef, ham, lamb, pork, poultry • Ground meats • Fish • Liver • Eggs • Smooth nut butter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough, fibrous meats • Meats with gristle • Meat in casing, like sausage or hot dogs • Deli meats with whole spices or casings • Shellfish • Chunky nut butter • Dried beans, legumes, peas and lentils, baked beans |
| Grains | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads, rolls, tortillas, waffles, pancakes, matzo, crackers, pretzels, and pasta made from white or refined flour • Corn bread, corn tortillas • Farina, cream of wheat and oatmeal • Dry cereals made from corn, rice, oats or refined wheat • White rice • Hominy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain breads, rolls and crackers • Breads, rolls, or crackers with added bran, seeds, nuts or coconut • Whole wheat pasta • Cooked or dry cereals with whole grains, bran, raisins or nuts, or cereals advertised as “high fiber” • Potato skins • Brown or wild rice • Popcorn |

Table 3. Low-fiber diet after ileostomy (continued)

| Food Group | Foods to Choose | Foods to Avoid |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Vegetables | <i>Tip: All vegetables should be cooked until soft. Vegetables that are canned are often softer than fresh or frozen vegetables.</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomato and vegetable juices • Potatoes without skin, potato chips • Well-cooked vegetables without seeds or skins • Pureed or canned skinless tomatoes, tomato paste or sauce • Pureed vegetables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All raw vegetables • Fresh salads and leafy greens • Artichokes • May cause blockage: bean sprouts, raw cabbage, celery, coleslaw, corn, cucumbers, peppers, mushrooms, peas, pickles, relishes • May cause diarrhea: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, tomatoes • May cause gas: asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, green pepper, onions, radishes, turnips |
| Fruit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bananas • Soft melons • Peeled and cooked apples • Canned fruits (except pineapple) • Pureed fruits • Diluted fruit juices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw fresh fruits • May cause blockage: apples (unpeeled), coconut, dried fruit, grapes, pineapple • May cause diarrhea: dried fruits, stone fruits (plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots), fruit juice, prune juice • May cause gas: apples, bananas, grapes, melons, prunes |
| Fats/Oils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with small amounts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fats may cause symptoms or discomfort |
| Desserts/ Sweets | <i>Tip: Start with a small portion.</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain cakes and cookies • Cream pies • Pies made from allowed fruits • Marshmallows • Hard candy • Jelly • Honey, molasses, syrup, sugar and chocolate syrup (small amounts) • Cocoa powder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gelatin, popsicles • Pudding, custard • Italian ice • Ice cream, sherbet • Desserts or candy that contain nuts, coconut or dried fruits; jam, preserves or marmalade with seeds |

Table 3. Low-fiber diet after ileostomy (continued)

| Food Group | Foods to Choose | Foods to Avoid |
|------------|--|---|
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bouillon, broth, cream soups made from allowed foods, and strained or pureed soup • Casseroles or mixed dishes made from allowed foods • Ketchup • Prepared mustard • Vinegar • Finely ground spices and herbs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soups made with vegetables to avoid • Pizza made with vegetables to avoid • Olives • Chocolate and carob • Carbonated beverages (sparkling water, soda) • Caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, hot chocolate) • Whole spices like peppercorn, cloves • Seed spices like caraway seeds and anise seeds • Fresh herbs |