

## Gastroparesis

Gastroparesis occurs when the nerves of the stomach are damaged. As a result, the muscles cannot work as well to move food through the digestive tract. This causes the stomach to empty more slowly. You may have:

*If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.*

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Fullness/bloating soon after eating

If you have diabetes, you may also have:

- Wide swings in blood glucose
- Unexpected low blood glucose after meals

Symptoms can vary from week-to-week or even day-to-day. This guide can help you change your diet to help manage the symptoms.

## Managing Your Symptoms

How the stomach empties can vary from one person to another. As a result, it often requires “trial and error” to find what changes in your diet work for you. The goal is to decrease the chance for flare-ups, and manage your diet when symptoms occur.

Following a range of diet types can aid in managing your symptoms. You may need to adjust your diet based on your symptoms. During a flare-up, start with a clear liquid diet. As your symptoms improve, you can advance to the next type of diet.



## Helpful Diet Tips

- **Liquid diet.** With gastroparesis, liquid calories are generally better tolerated than solids.
- **Avoid large meals.** The larger the meal, the more slowly your stomach will empty. This can cause discomfort. Eat 4 to 6 small meals throughout the day.
- **Limit high fat foods.** Fats are still important to help your body use and absorb calories and vitamins. However, fats may slow your stomach from emptying. Many people are able to tolerate fat in a liquid form. Try milkshakes, whole milk, and nutrition supplements to find what works best for you.

- **Eat nutritious foods first.** You may feel a sense of fullness or have a satisfied appetite early in your meal. Choose soft or pureed foods high in calories and protein first. Try not to fill up on “empty calories” with little nutritional value.
- **Chew foods well.** Some meats may be better tolerated ground or pureed. Keep foods simple, soft and easy to chew.
- **Avoid high fiber foods.** Foods high in fiber may remain in your stomach longer. This may cause you to feel full or that something is “stuck” in your stomach. Choose low fiber foods such as:
  - White bread and refined cereals and rice products. Avoid products made with whole grain flour, bran, seeds or nuts.
  - Canned or cooked fruits and vegetables without seeds or skin. Drink juices without pulp.
  - Tender, ground or well-cooked meats. Avoid all dried beans and peas.

**Sit up while eating and for 1 hour after meals.** This may help ease discomfort. When symptoms are severe, let your stomach rest. Until symptoms pass, consider other options, such as:

- Liquids or meal replacements (examples: Ensure™, Glucerna™) rather than solids.
- Foods that are mixed or “thinned” with broth or other liquids.
- Blended or pureed food.

**Stay hydrated.** Persistent vomiting can cause your body to lose a lot of fluid. During symptom flare-ups sip on water or rehydration drinks to replace lost fluids.

**If you have diabetes, it is important to keep blood glucose levels under control.** Test your blood glucose levels and call your doctor if you are having a hard time controlling them.

### **Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Registered Dietitians and Medicine Nursing

## Diet Recommendations for Gastroparesis

Food Groups	Recommended Foods	Foods to Limit
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee, tea</li> <li>• Diet soft drinks</li> <li>• Juices (limit to 4 oz./day)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None, unless problem with liquid fat, such as dairy products.</li> </ul>
Dairy Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skim or 1% milk (as tolerated)</li> <li>• Buttermilk, evaporated milk</li> <li>• Non-fat or low-fat plain or flavored yogurt</li> <li>• Low fat frozen yogurt</li> <li>• Cottage cheese</li> <li>• Low-fat ice cream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None, unless problem with liquid fat</li> </ul>
Bread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White bread or plain rolls</li> <li>• Bagels (plain or egg)</li> <li>• English muffin</li> <li>• Pita bread</li> <li>• Tortilla</li> <li>• Pancake or waffles</li> <li>• Saltines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any whole grain or bran bread</li> <li>• Biscuits, sweet rolls, muffins, snack crackers with added fat</li> <li>• Fried tortillas</li> <li>• Corn bread</li> <li>• Croissants</li> </ul>
Cereal and Pasta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick oats (plain), grits</li> <li>• Cream of Wheat, Cream of Rice</li> <li>• Puffed wheat, Cheerios</li> <li>• Rice Krispies, Special K</li> <li>• Rice (plain)</li> <li>• Pasta (plain)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bran or granola cereal</li> <li>• Whole wheat pasta</li> <li>• Brown rice</li> </ul>
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All well-cooked and canned vegetables without seeds or skins</li> <li>• Strained baby vegetables</li> <li>• Vegetable juice/tomato juice</li> <li>• Mushrooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All others</li> </ul>
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ripe banana, melon, applesauce</li> <li>• Canned fruits (light syrup)</li> <li>• Strained baby fruits</li> <li>• Juices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All others</li> </ul>

Food Groups	Recommended Foods	Foods to Limit
Meats and Meat Substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low fat meats – fish, poultry without skin, pork loin, sirloin or beef tenderloin</li> <li>• Fat-free lunch meat</li> <li>• Lean ground beef</li> <li>• Tofu</li> <li>• Strained baby meats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All fried and breaded meat and seafood</li> <li>• High fat red meats</li> <li>• Hot dogs, sausages, salami</li> <li>• All dried peas and beans</li> </ul>
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broth</li> <li>• Bouillon</li> <li>• Strained cream soups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All other soups</li> </ul>
Fats	<p>As tolerated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cream cheese</li> <li>• Mayonnaise</li> <li>• Margarine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuts</li> <li>• Coconut</li> <li>• Fried foods</li> </ul>
Desserts and Sweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angel food cake</li> <li>• Animal crackers</li> <li>• Custard/pudding</li> <li>• Gelatin</li> <li>• Plain sherbet (no fruit pieces)</li> <li>• Popsicles</li> <li>• Vanilla wafers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All other cakes, cookies, pies and pastries unless made with low-fat ingredients</li> <li>• Any desserts with bran, seeds, nuts, dried fruit</li> </ul>