

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

Colostomy Diet Guidelines

A colostomy is a surgical opening in the abdomen in which the large intestine (colon) is brought to the skin surface. The opening in the colon at the skin is called a stoma. The stoma becomes the exit for all bowel movements and gas. Having a colostomy should not affect your ability to eat and digest food. This brochure will help you follow a diet that will decrease symptoms such as gas, odor, and stools that are too loose or too firm.

Nutrition After a Colostomy

- As you recover after surgery, you will begin with a clear liquid diet.
- Then, add low-fiber, solid foods first. Foods with high fiber are more difficult for the body to digest.
- As you heal, foods with more fiber (whole grains, brown rice, oats) can be slowly added back into the diet.
- After 6 weeks, most people are able to resume a normal diet.

Adding Foods Back into the Diet

- Add one new food every few days. Start with foods that you were able to eat without problems before surgery.
- Some foods may cause symptoms, such as gas, odor, or diarrhea.
- It is best to keep a list of foods that cause these symptoms. If a certain food causes symptoms, avoid it for 2 to 3 weeks. Then, try it again in small amounts to see how your body reacts to the food.

To Reduce Gas and Prevent Odors

- Avoid drinking with straws, and avoid carbonated beverages, chewing gum, and smoking or chewing tobacco. These things can cause you to swallow air and lead to gas production.
- Limit fruit skins and vegetable skins.
- Limit beans, peas, garlic, leeks, onions, cabbage, broccoli, asparagus, fish, eggs and alcoholic drinks.
- Buttermilk, yogurt, cranberry juice and parsley can help reduce gas and bad odors.

To Prevent Diarrhea and Help Thicken Stool

- Avoid spicy, fried, and greasy foods, and foods high in sugar.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol.
- If you feel unwell after eating dairy foods, try lactose-free products.
- Bananas, applesauce, white rice, pasta, potatoes, smooth peanut butter, and cheese can help thicken stool.

Other Important Tips to Remember

- Drink a *minimum* of 8 to 10 cups of fluid per day.
- Eat slowly and chew foods thoroughly.
- Eat smaller more frequent meals instead of large meals.
- Eat on a similar schedule every day.
- Eat your largest meal during the middle of the day to avoid high ostomy output at night.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at 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.

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 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.695.3661.

Developed by: NMH Department of Clinical Nutrition

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