

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

## Ileostomy Diet Guidelines

An ileostomy is a surgical opening in the abdomen in which the lower end 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 bowel movements and gas. An ileostomy affects the way your body digests and absorbs nutrients. 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 an Ileostomy

As you recover after surgery, follow a low fiber diet (see Appendix 1).

- **Choose:** cooked or processed fruits and vegetables, refined (white) grains, dairy as tolerated.
- **Avoid:** raw, unpeeled fruits and vegetables, nuts, beans, seeds, whole grains (such as brown rice, whole grain pasta, wheat bread).

### Adding Foods Back into the Diet

- Starting 6 weeks after surgery, add 1 new food every few days. Start with foods that you were able to eat without problems before surgery.
- Slowly add fiber foods back into your meals to allow your body to get used to them.
- 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.
- Be aware that some foods can cause blockage at the stoma site.

### To Prevent Blockage

- Eat slowly and chew foods thoroughly.
- Avoid fruit skins and vegetable skins, salad greens, dried fruit, tough and fibrous raw fruits and vegetables (celery, coconut, pineapple), nuts, whole grains, tough fibrous meats and sausage casings.

### ***To Reduce Gas and Prevent Unpleasant Odors***

- Avoid drinking with straws, and avoid carbonated beverages and smoking or chewing tobacco. These things can cause you to swallow air and lead to gas production.
- Your body will release gas about 2 to 4 hours after eating gas-producing foods.
- Limit fruit skins and vegetable skins.

### ***To Prevent Diarrhea and Help Thicken Stool***

- Avoid spicy, fried and greasy foods.
- Avoid beverages or foods high in sugar or artificial sweeteners (such as sorbitol, mannitol or zylitol). They can cause diarrhea and increase output.
- Choose grains with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol.
- If you feel unwell after eating dairy foods, try lactose-free products such as:
  - Lactaid® milk
  - Lactose-free yogurt
  - Non-dairy milk/cheese/yogurt products (such as almond or soy products)
- Once you start adding fiber to your meals, add foods such as whole grain pasta, grains, rice, potatoes, fruits and vegetables to provide bulk to the stool and slow movement of stool through the intestine. This will help to lessen diarrhea.

### ***Other Important Tips to Remember***

- Some food may change the color of your stool.
  - Beets and food with red dye may turn stool red.
  - Asparagus, broccoli and spinach may darken stool.
- Eat slowly and chew foods thoroughly to a “mashed potato” consistency.
- Eat small, more frequent meals instead of large meals. Try 5 to 6 small meals instead of 3 large meals per day.
- Eat on a similar schedule every day. This will help your body absorb nutrients from foods and reduce gas production.
- Do not skip meals. This can cause the small intestine to be more active, increasing gas and watery stool.
- Eat your largest meal during the middle of the day to avoid high ostomy output at night.
- If you are losing weight, avoid high-sugar supplements such as Ensure® or Boost®, as they may increase your output. Instead try low-sugar supplements with less than 10 grams of sugar per serving. Examples include:
  - Carnation® Instant Breakfast Essentials™ No Sugar Added
  - Boost Glucose Control®

Try adding protein powders to foods and beverages to add calories and protein.

- If you do not like drinking nutrition supplements, try eating high calorie/high protein snacks. Examples include:
  - 5 saltine crackers with 2 ounces of cheddar cheese (provides about 290 calories and 15 grams of protein).
  - 4 graham cracker squares with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (provides about 250 calories and 9 grams of protein).

## Food Recommendations after Your Ileostomy

Foods that may help thicken loose output	Applesauce, bananas, white rice, cheese, marshmallows, saltines, 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 or seeds, peaches, peas, prunes, caffeinated drinks, fruit, fruit juice, sugar-free substitutes, tomatoes, raw green leafy vegetables, whole grains
Foods that can contribute to food blockage	Unpeeled apples, bean sprouts, raw cabbage, casing on sausage, 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 which 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 which may improve 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	Bananas, broths, potatoes, tomatoes, crackers, sports drinks, rehydration drink recipes (see section on rehydration)

## Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when your body loses more fluid than it is taking in. This can cause a dangerous imbalance in the way your body functions. If you have high volumes of output (diarrhea) from your ostomy or are vomiting, you may be at risk for dehydration. Stoma output of more than 1 liter (1000 mL) per day is considered high output. If this occurs for more than 24 hours, be sure to:

- Avoid foods that may be contributing to diarrhea.
- Increase foods that may help slow or thicken output (see table on page 3).

If you have *watery* output for more than 24 hours, contact your health care provider. Also, be aware of the signs and symptoms of dehydration which include:

- Thirst
- Lethargy
- Dry mouth
- Decreased urine output
- Dizziness when standing up
- Muscle or abdominal cramps

### **Keep Well-hydrated**

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

- Drink a *minimum* of 8 to 10 cups of liquids per day. However, to avoid flushing foods through too quickly, drink fluids 30 minutes *after* a meal or snack. This will help your body absorb nutrients better.
- Sip on liquids throughout the day.
- Avoid high-sugar drinks, alcohol, and caffeine-containing beverages.
- Try to remember to drink a glass of liquid whenever you empty your pouch to help you stay hydrated.
- Drink plenty of water, but it is also important to include drinks that rehydrate your body and keep your electrolytes balanced.

### **Rehydration Drinks**

If you have high ostomy output, you may need a rehydration drink to replace your fluids. Some commercial sports drinks may increase ostomy output due to sugar or sugar-free sweeteners. Instead, try the following drinks:

- Pedialyte®
- Rehydralyte®
- Ceralyte®
- EquaLyte®
- DripDrop®

There are several recipes you can use to make your own rehydration drinks.

## 6 Rehydration Drink Recipes

<p><b>#1</b></p> <p>5 cups water            ½ teaspoon salt            ¼ teaspoon salt substitute that contains potassium (such as NoSalt, Morton Salt Substitute, or Nu-Salt)            ½ teaspoon baking soda            2 Tablespoons sugar</p> <p>(Recipe from World Health Organization)</p>	<p><b>#2</b></p> <p>5 cups water            1 cup orange juice            8 teaspoons sugar            ½ teaspoon baking soda            ½ teaspoon salt</p>	<p><b>#3</b></p> <p>1 ½ cups Gatorade Thirst Quencher®            2 ½ cups water            ¾ teaspoon salt</p>
<p><b>#4</b></p> <p>4 cups Gatorade G2®            ¾ teaspoon salt</p>	<p><b>#5</b></p> <p>½ cup grape or cranberry juice            3 ½ cups water            ½ teaspoon salt</p>	<p><b>#6</b></p> <p>1 cup apple juice            3 cups water            1 teaspoon salt</p>

### 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 Department of Clinical Nutrition

## Appendix 1: Low Fiber Diet for Ileostomy Patients

Food Group	Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Dairy Products	Milk; cream; cheese; yogurt	Cheese with seeds or nuts; yogurt with seeds, nuts, or fruit skins
Proteins	Ground or well-cooked tender beef, ham, veal, lamb, pork, or poultry; eggs; fish; liver; smooth peanut butter	Tough fibrous meats with gristle; chunky peanut butter; dried peas and lentils; meat in casing like sausage or hot dogs; deli meats with whole spices or casings; shellfish
Breads Starches	White, rye, graham breads and rolls; sweet rolls, donuts, waffles or pancakes; French toast; biscuits; matzo; soda, saltine, or graham crackers; pretzels; cooked cornmeal, farina, cream of wheat, or oatmeal; dry cereals made from corn, rice, oats, or refined wheat; mashed, baked, or creamed potatoes without skins; pasta; white rice; hominy; potato chips	Breads, rolls, or crackers with added bran, seeds, nuts, or coconut; cooked or dry cereals with whole grains, bran, raisins, or nuts, or cereals advertised as "high fiber;" whole wheat pasta; potato skins; brown or wild rice; popcorn
Vegetables	Tomato and vegetable juices; tender, cooked or canned: asparagus tips, beets, broccoli tips, carrots, eggplant (peeled), pureed or canned skinless tomatoes, tomato paste or sauce, winter squash, pumpkin, avocado; pureed vegetables	All raw vegetables; artichokes; baked beans; beets and beet greens; Brussels sprouts; cabbage; sauerkraut; cauliflower; collard and mustard greens; green peppers; parsnips; peas; mushrooms; onions; rutabagas; fresh tomatoes; turnips; spinach; watercress; zucchini; green beans; salads; sweet potatoes
Fruit	Fruit juices except prune juice; cooked and canned: applesauce, peaches, pears, fruit cocktail, mandarin oranges; pureed fruits; bananas	Apples; apricots; berries; cranberries; currants; cherries; dates; figs; grapes; grapefruit; guavas; melons; nectarines; oranges; prunes; fresh peaches; fresh pears; fresh or canned pineapple; fresh plums; fresh rhubarb; frozen/thawed berries; dried fruit; coconut
Fats Oils	Margarine; butter; cream; mayonnaise; salad oils; plain salad dressings made from allowed foods; plain gravy; crisp bacon	

## Appendix 1: Low Fiber Diet for Ileostomy Patients (continued)

Food Group	Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Desserts Sweets	Plain cakes and cookies; gelatin; sherbet; ice cream; popsicles; pudding or custard; cream pies; pies made from allowed fruits; hard candy; honey, jelly, molasses, syrup, sugar, or chocolate syrup; gum drops; marshmallows	Desserts or candy that contain nuts, coconut, or dried fruits; jam, preserves, or marmalade with seeds
Other	Bouillon, broth, cream soups made from allowed foods; any strained or pureed soup; casseroles or mixed dishes made from allowed foods; catsup; horseradish; prepared mustard; vinegar; cocoa powder; spices and herbs that are not whole, seeds or fresh	Soups made from vegetables not allowed; pizza made with vegetables not allowed; coconut; pickles; olives; carob or chocolate; carbonated beverages; coffee; tea; hot chocolate; whole herbs and spices like peppercorns, cloves, anise seeds, caraway seeds and fresh herbs