

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

Colostomy Diet Guidelines

A colostomy is a surgical opening in the abdomen in which the large intestine (colon) is brought to the skin's surface. The opening in the colon at the skin is called a stoma. The stoma becomes the place where bowel movements and gas exit. Having a colostomy should not affect your ability to eat and digest food. By following specific diet guidelines, you can reduce symptoms such as gas, odor, and stools that are too loose or too firm.

What to eat after a colostomy

- Begin with a clear liquid diet.
- Add low-fiber, solid foods back into your diet first. Foods with high fiber are more difficult for your body to digest.
- As you heal, slowly add foods with more fiber (whole grains, brown rice, oats) back into your diet.
- After 6 weeks, most people can eat their usual diet.

Adding foods back into your diet

- Add 1 new food every few days. Start with foods you were able to eat without problems before surgery.
- Keep a list of foods that cause gas, odor or diarrhea. If a food causes symptoms, avoid it for 2 to 3 weeks. Then, try it again in small amounts to see how your body reacts.

Reducing gas and preventing odors

- Avoid drinking with straws, carbonated beverages, chewing gum, and smoking or chewing tobacco. These things can cause you to swallow air and produce gas.
- Limit fruit skins and vegetable skins.
- Limit beans, peas, garlic, leeks, onions, cabbage, broccoli, asparagus, fish, eggs and alcoholic drinks.
- Add buttermilk, yogurt, cranberry juice and parsley to your diet.

Preventing diarrhea and thickening stool

- Avoid spicy, fried and greasy foods, and foods high in sugar.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol.
- Try lactose-free options if you do not feel well after eating milk or milk products.

- Add bananas, applesauce, white rice, pasta, potatoes, smooth peanut butter and cheese to your diet to naturally thicken stool.

Other important tips

- Drink a *minimum* of 8 to 10 cups of liquids each day.
- Eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals instead of large meals.
- Eat meals and snacks on a similar schedule every day.
- Eat your largest meal during the middle of the day to avoid high colostomy output at night.

Colostomy diet suggestions

Food type	Foods recommended	Foods not recommended
Grains	Choose grain foods with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream of wheat or rice • Grits (fine ground) • Tortillas: white flour or corn • White rice, well cooked (Do not rinse or soak before cooking.) • Cold and hot cereals made from white or refined flour such as puffed rice or corn flakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% whole-wheat bread and bread made with whole-grain flour, seeds or nuts • Brown rice, quinoa, kasha and barley • Whole-grain tortillas • Whole-wheat pasta • Whole-grain and high-fiber cereals, including oatmeal, bran flakes and shredded wheat • Popcorn
Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean, very tender, well-cooked poultry, fish, beef, pork or lamb (If you have a stricture or colostomy, slow cook meats until soft and chop.) • Eggs, well cooked • Smooth nut butters (peanut butter, almond butter and sunflower butter) • Tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steak, pork chops and other meats that are fatty or have gristle • Fried meat, poultry or fish • Seafood with a tough or rubbery texture, such as shrimp • Luncheon meats, such as bologna and salami • Sausage, bacon and hot dogs • Dried beans, peas and lentils • Hummus • Sushi • Nuts and chunky nut butters

Food type	Foods recommended	Foods not recommended
Milk and milk products	<p>If you have lactose intolerance, milk products from cows or goats may make your diarrhea worse. Foods marked with an asterisk (*) have lactose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk* • Lactose-free milk • Buttermilk* • Fortified non-dairy milks (almond, cashew, coconut and rice) • Kefir* • Yogurt* or lactose-free yogurt • Mild cheese (Hard and aged cheeses, such as cheddar, Swiss and Parmesan, tend to be lower in lactose.) • Cottage cheese* or lactose-free cottage cheese • Low-fat ice cream* or lactose-free ice cream • Sherbet* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole milk • Pea milk and soy milk (may cause diarrhea, gas, bloating and abdominal pain) • Cream • Half-and-half • Sour cream • Yogurt with added fruit, nuts, granola or chocolate
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned and well-cooked vegetables without seeds, skins or hulls • Carrots or green beans, cooked • White, red or yellow potatoes without skins • Strained vegetable juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfalfa or bean sprouts • Raw or undercooked vegetables: beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, greens, corn, cucumber, peas, kale, lima beans, mushrooms, okra, olives, pickles and relish, onions, parsnips, peppers, potato skins, sauerkraut, spinach and tomatoes

Food type	Foods recommended	Foods not recommended
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft and well-cooked fruits without skins, seeds or membranes • Canned fruit in juice, such as peaches or pears • Applesauce • Fruit juice without pulp, diluted by half with water (Fruit drinks fortified with vitamin C may be better tolerated than 100% fruit juice.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw fruit • Dried fruit • Avocado • Berries • Coconut • Canned fruit in syrup • Canned fruit with mandarin oranges • Papaya and pineapple • Fruit juice with pulp • Prune juice • Fruit skin
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy oils, such as olive oil, canola oil or plant oils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid fats
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broth and soups made from allowed foods • Desserts (small portions) without whole grains, seeds, nuts, raisins or coconut • Jelly (clear) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pork rinds

Sample 1-day menu

Breakfast
2 scrambled eggs 1 slice white toast (1 gram fiber) 1 teaspoon margarine 1/2 cup cream of wheat (0.5 gram fiber)
Morning snack
1 cup lactose-free nutrition supplement
Lunch
3 tablespoons tuna 1 tablespoon mayonnaise 2 slices white bread (2 grams fiber) 1 cup chicken noodle soup (1 gram fiber) 1/2 cup apple juice
Afternoon snack
6 saltine crackers 2 ounces low-fat cheddar cheese
Dinner
3 ounces tender chicken breast 1 cup white rice (0.5 gram fiber) 1/2 cup cooked canned green beans (2 grams fiber) 1/2 cup cranberry juice
Evening snack
1 cup lactose-free nutrition supplement