Gastroparesis

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

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain or discomfort
- 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 be different for each person. As a result, it often takes “trial and error” to find which changes in your diet work for you. The goal is to decrease the chance for flare-ups and manage your diet when symptoms happen.

Following a range of diet types can help you manage 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 easier to take 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.** High-fat foods may slow your stomach from emptying. Many people can take fat better 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 easier to eat if they are ground or pureed. Keep foods simple, soft and easy to chew.

- **Avoid high-fiber foods.** Foods high in fiber may stay in your stomach longer. This may cause you to feel full or like 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.**

- **Avoid food and beverages that may increase acid reflux.** These foods include: acidic, spicy and greasy foods, caffeine, and mint.

- **Avoid carbonated beverages.** They increase bloating.

- **Do not drink alcohol.**

- **Do not smoke.**

**Sit up while eating and for 1 hour after meals.** This may help ease discomfort. When symptoms are severe, let your stomach rest. Until your symptoms improve, think about other options, such as:
  - Liquids or meal replacements (Ensure™ or Glucerna™) rather than solids.
  - Foods that are mixed or “thinned” with broth or other liquids.
  - Blended or pureed food.

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

**If you have diabetes, it is important to manage your blood glucose levels.** Test your blood glucose levels and call your physician if you are having a hard time managing them.
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<th>Food groups</th>
<th>Recommended foods</th>
<th>Foods to limit</th>
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| Beverages         | • Decaffeinated coffee or tea  
                   • Non-acidic juices (limit to 4 ounces per day)  | • Juices with pulp  
                   • Orange, grapefruit and tomato juice  
                   • Alcohol  
                   • Carbonated beverages |
| Dairy products    | • Skim or 1% milk (as tolerated)  
                   • Buttermilk, evaporated milk  
                   • Non-fat or low-fat plain or flavored yogurt  
                   • Low-fat frozen yogurt  
                   • Low-fat cheese  
                   • Cottage cheese  
                   • Low-fat ice cream  
                   • Lactose-free products (if you are lactose intolerant)  | • Whole milk, 2% milk if liquid fat increases your symptoms  
                   • Cheese slices  
                   • Soy milk (may cause bloating) |
| Bread             | • Breads with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving  
                   • White bread or plain rolls  
                   • Bagels (plain)  
                   • English muffin  
                   • Pita bread  
                   • Tortilla  
                   • Pancake or waffles  
                   • Saltines  
                   • Pretzels  | • Breads with 2 grams or more of fiber per serving  
                   • Any whole grain or bran bread  
                   • Biscuits, sweet rolls, muffins, snack crackers with added fat  
                   • Fried tortillas  
                   • Corn bread  
                   • Croissants |
| Cereal and pasta  | • Quick oats (plain), grits  
                   • Cream of Wheat®, Cream of Rice®  
                   • Cereals with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving  
                   • Rice Krispies®, Special K®  
                   • Rice (plain)  
                   • Pasta (plain)  | • Cereals with 2 grams or more of fiber per serving  
                   • Bran, whole wheat or granola cereals  
                   • Whole wheat pasta  
                   • Brown rice |
| Vegetables        | • All well-cooked and canned vegetables without seeds or skins  
                   • Mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes without skin  
                   • Strained baby food vegetables  
                   • Non-acidic vegetable juice  | • All other vegetables  
                   • Tomato juice |
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| Fruit                             | • Ripe banana, melon, applesauce  
• Canned fruits (in light syrup)  
• Strained baby food fruits  
• Non-acidic juices without pulp | • All other fruits  
• Juices with pulp  
• Oranges, grapefruit and tomato juice |
| Meats and meat substitutes and protein foods | • Low-fat meats – fish, poultry without skin, pork loin, sirloin or beef tenderloin  
• Fat-free lunch meat  
• Lean ground beef  
• Tofu  
• Strained baby food meats  
• Egg whites or low-fat egg substitute | • All fried and breaded meat and seafood  
• High-fat red meats  
• Hot dogs, sausages, salami  
• All dried peas and beans |
| Soups                             | • Broth  
• Bouillon  
• Strained cream soups | • All other soups |
| Fats                              | As you are able  
• Cream cheese  
• Mayonnaise  
• Margarine  
• Canola, olive oil | • Nuts  
• Coconut  
• Fried foods  
• Butter |
| Desserts and sweets               | • Angel food cake  
• Animal crackers  
• Custard/pudding  
• Gelatin  
• Plain sherbet (no fruit pieces)  
• Popsicles  
• Vanilla wafers | • All other cakes, cookies, pies and pastries unless made with low-fat ingredients  
• Any desserts with bran, seeds, nuts, dried fruit |