

Nutrition and Dietetics

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Colostomy and Diet

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What is a colostomy?

A colostomy is a surgical procedure where the colon is cut and brought through an opening in the abdominal wall to form a stoma.

Digestive contents (output) and wind pass into an individually fitted pouch which is worn at all times. The stoma can be temporary or permanent depending on the reason for the surgery.

Because water and salt are absorbed in your colon the consistency of your output will depend on the amount of colon removed. The more colon you have removed the looser your output will be.

Should I be on a special diet?

After your colostomy has healed and is functioning normally you should be able to return to a normal diet.

However, initially you should follow a diet which is low in fibrous foods as they are difficult to digest and may cause blockages if not chewed properly.

Only for the first **6-8** weeks after your operation you should avoid the following high fibre foods:

- Celery
- Dried fruit
- Mango
- Nuts
- Pineapple
- Pips
- Salad
- Sweetcorn
- Coconut
- Raw fruit
- Mushrooms
- Peas
- Piths
- Raw vegetables
- Vegetable skins

After 6-8 weeks, and once your stoma has settled, you can reintroduce fibrous foods, ensuring that they are well cooked and chewed. Increase them gradually and introduce one food at a time to reduce bloating and wind.

What should my diet consist of?

Initially following surgery, your output may be more liquid and your appetite may be reduced. To help you to recover you should:

- Have small frequent meals and additional snacks, especially if your appetite is poor.
- Once you start to feel better aim for 3 meals per day to help make your stoma output more predictable.
- Take your time and chew your food well.
- Drink 8-10 cups of fluid per day (including tea, coffee, milk, squash).
- Avoid heavy snacks, alcohol and caffeinated drinks before bed.

It is important after your surgery to eat a variety of different food groups to help you recover, these should include:

- Protein foods to help with wound healing, such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese and milk.
- Starchy foods to provide energy, such as: bread, cereal, pasta, and rice, all of which should be low fibre, i.e. white bread, skinless potatoes.
- Include nutritious snacks, such as cheese and crackers, yoghurts and milky puddings.
- Choose plainly cooked foods as spicy dishes may increase your output.

My diet after 6-8 weeks post surgery

You may find that some foods are a problem for you; tolerance varies from person to person. You can try all foods and only avoid those that repeatedly cause adverse symptoms.

It is important that you follow a varied diet and include all the main food groups.

Protein foods are essential for health and repair of body tissues:

- Meat: beef, pork, bacon, lamb, liver, kidney.
- Poultry: chicken, turkey.
- Fish.
- Eggs.
- Nut products such as smooth peanut butter (not actual nuts).
- Meat alternatives: textured vegetable protein, Quorn, tofu.

Include two portions of these foods each day. Choose lean cuts and try to cook foods without adding extra fat (e.g. grill or oven bake rather than frying).

Dairy foods are good sources of calcium, which is important to maintain healthy bones. These foods also provide protein and some vitamins:

- Milk
- Cheese
- Yogurt

Aim for three servings a day and choose lower fat alternatives where you can.

Starchy foods provide energy, vitamins and fibre and we should base our meals on these foods. Higher fibre versions can help relieve constipation. Examples of starchy foods include:

- Bread, chapattis
- Breakfast cereals & oats
- Pasta & rice
- Potatoes & sweet potatoes
- Plantains, green bananas, yams

Vegetables and fruits provide fibre and a range of vitamins and minerals. You should aim to eat a wide variety and try to eat 5 portions a day. A portion is:

- 2 tablespoons of vegetables
- A small salad

- A piece of medium fruit (e.g. an apple, banana) or 2 small fruits(e.g. mandarin oranges)
- A small (150ml) glass of fruit juice

Certain fruits and vegetables can cause wind, odour or affect how thick your stoma output will be. Remember this varies from person to person. If you find some fruits or vegetables upset you, then try:

- peeled fruits
- tinned fruits in natural juices
- stewed, baked or pureed fruits
- fruit juices (unsweetened)
- well cooked or pureed vegetables
- vegetables in soups or casseroles (pureed if necessary)

Fats and oils provide essential fats, some vitamins and energy. However too much fat is not healthy so these foods should be used sparingly e.g. Butter & margarine, cooking oils, mayonnaise and oily salad dressings

Fats and sugars are found in 'treat' foods. Try not to eat them too often. Examples include, cakes, puddings, chocolate, sweets and sugary drinks.

Alcohol drunk in excessive amount is bad for your health and can increase your stoma output. Recommendations are no more than 14 units per week with 1-2 alcohol free days a week.

- Half a pint of beer = 1.5 units
- Single (25ml) pub measure of spirit = 1 unit
- Small glass of wine (125ml) = 1.5 units

If you are taking medication check with your doctor before you drink alcohol.

Wind

Initially, you may pass more wind than usual, but this settles over time. Tips to reduce this include:

- Eat more slowly and chew food well in a relaxed environment.
- Let fizzy drinks go flat.
- Avoid drinking through a straw.
- Avoid chewing gum.
- Eat regularly/avoid long periods without food.
- Avoid smoking.
- Avoid talking or drinking when eating.
- Peppermint water, tea, or capsules may help.

How can I reduce the odour?

Certain foods cause more odour than others, however remember that you will only detect smells when changing your stoma bag. Vinegar and parsley added to fish dishes may help eliminate the odour. Also peppermint oil capsules, yogurt and buttermilk can help reduce odour.

You can also try ostomy deodorant sprays and drops – ask your stoma nurse about this.

Examples of foods which can increase odour include:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| - Asparagus | -Fish |
| - Baked beans | -Garlic |
| - Broccoli | -Green veg |
| - Brussel sprouts | -Onions |
| - Cabbage | -Peanut butter |
| - Cauliflower | -Some spices |
| - Cucumber | -Strong cheeses |
| - Eggs | |

My output is more liquid, why?

Certain foods can make your stoma output more liquid especially when eaten in large quantities.

Examples include: large quantities of high fibre foods (e.g. wholemeal bread, wholegrain cereals, pulses, green leafy vegetables, raw vegetables, sweetcorn, fruit and nuts), spicy foods, alcohol, caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, cola), fruit juices, fried foods, sorbitol (artificial sweetener).

What should I do if I get diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea can occur for a variety of reasons (e.g. stomach bug, stress, antibiotics). Occasionally some people are more prone to loose stools.

If you experience diarrhoea you should drink plenty of fluids (e.g. water or squash) and reduce the quantities of foods that cause more liquid output (see above). If your diarrhoea persists for more than 2 days, consult your G.P.

Certain foods may help thicken your stoma output:

- Cheese
- Cheesecake
- Smooth/ creamy peanut butter
- White rice
- Marshmallows
- Jelly babies
- Tapioca
- Bananas
- Pasta
- Yogurts
- Bagels, bread, toast.

Summary

- After your operation it is important to start eating regularly to get your stoma working.
- You will only need to avoid very fibrous foods for a few weeks after surgery as this help prevent your stoma from becoming blocked.
- Eating regularly helps make stoma output more predictable.
- After **6-8** weeks you should be eating a normal balanced diet.
- It can take several months for the stoma to settle down and for wind and odour to decrease.

Useful contacts:

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