

Diet and Diabetic Gastroparesis

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What is gastroparesis?

Gastroparesis is a condition in which the stomach cannot empty itself of food normally, which means that food may pass through the stomach more slowly.

What causes diabetic gastroparesis?

Gastroparesis is caused by damage to the nerves controlling the emptying of the stomach. If these nerves are damaged, the muscles of your stomach may not work properly and the movement of food can slow down.

Long term high blood glucose levels can damage the stomach nerves and cause gastroparesis.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can vary from person to person, and can even vary from day to day. Symptoms may include:

- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting
- Feeling full quickly when eating
- Bloating
- Heartburn
- Poor appetite and weight loss
- Abdominal pain or discomfort
- Poor blood glucose control if you have diabetes.

Treatment

Medications:

There are several medications for the treatment of gastroparesis to help relieve symptoms of nausea and help the process of stomach emptying, and your doctor may try different types or combinations. These may include:

- **Prokinetics**- these are medications which help your stomach muscles contract which helps food to move along
- **Antiemetics** – medications that control nausea

Other treatments:

- **Gastric pacemaker** - This may be used if dietary changes and medication do not help to control symptoms. A gastric pacemaker is an electronic device surgically inserted to stimulate the stomach which may help to control the symptoms of nausea and vomiting.

What can you do to manage your symptoms?

There are steps you can take to manage and control gastroparesis. The tips below are things that other people with gastroparesis have found helpful:

- ✓ Have small frequent meals: this way you won't feel as full and it will be easier for the food to leave your stomach. For example have 3 light meals with 2-3 snacks per day. It may help to set regular eating times, for example trying to eat every 3-4 hours.
- ✓ Sit up straight at mealtimes and chew well. Take your time with meals and try to reduce stress around mealtimes.
- ✓ Try soft, liquid or blended foods which are easy to digest.
- ✓ It may help to have your drinks before or after mealtimes.
- ✓ Sit or walk after eating rather than lying down. Light exercise may help.
- ✓ Choose foods low in fibre (see below).
- ✓ Aim for good blood glucose control. See below for more information on this.
- ✓ If you are struggling to eat, milk and yogurt can help to provide nutrition without greatly affecting blood glucose levels. Adding skim milk powder can increase the energy and protein content of your milk
- ✓ Don't smoke: smoking can stop your stomach from emptying as well.
- ✓ Take prescribed medication as advised.
- ✗ Avoid foods that are high in fat as these leave your stomach slowly. Most people can manage the fat in drinks e.g. milk, milkshakes so don't avoid these unless they cause you problems.
- ✗ Avoid alcohol and fizzy drinks.

Foods to choose:

- ✓ Soups, especially if blended
- ✓ Smoothies
- ✓ Soft, well-cooked vegetables
- ✓ Minced or pureed meat
- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Dairy foods and eggs
- ✓ Peeled fruit without pips or seeds
- ✓ Juices and milky drinks
- ✓ White breads and low fibre cereals (e.g. cornflakes, rice krispies)
- ✓ Potato without skin, white rice, pasta

Foods to avoid:

- ✗ Nuts and seeds
- ✗ Raw vegetables
- ✗ Vegetables high in fibre e.g. green leafy vegetables, squash, potato skins
- ✗ Fizzy drinks and alcohol
- ✗ Fruit with seeds or pips e.g. figs, passion fruit
- ✗ Dried fruit
- ✗ Bran/wholegrain cereal
- ✗ Granary/seeded bread
- ✗ Legumes and beans
- ✗ Solid meals that are very high in fat or protein

Diabetes and gastroparesis

- Because gastroparesis causes food to leave your stomach at unpredictable times, this can cause your blood glucose levels to fluctuate.
- You may need to monitor your blood glucose levels more often and you may need to adjust the amount of medication/insulin you take or the time you take it. Your diabetes specialist nurse or doctor will advise you on this.
- You may also be at greater risk of hypos. If you are unsure how to manage or treat hypos, ask your dietitian or diabetes specialist nurse for advice.

Sample Meal Plan

Break-fast	Rice Krispies / Cornflakes/ Quick-oats/ oat-based cereals e.g. Oatibix / Oatflakes/ Ready brek or 2 slices white toast with reduced fat spread and poached / boiled egg or grilled bacon, fat removed
Snack	2 plain biscuits, e.g. Rich Tea / Morning Coffee / yoghurt / milk / fruit
Lunch	White bread sandwich with turkey / chicken / egg / ham / cheese Soup and white bread Baked potato with cheese / tuna Chicken wrap
Snack	2 plain biscuits, e.g. Rich Tea / Morning Coffee / yoghurt / milk / fruit
Evening meal	Chicken / fish / ground lean meat, with Boiled / mashed / baked potato / rice / pasta Boiled vegetables
Snack	2 plain biscuits, e.g. Rich Tea / Morning Coffee / yoghurt / milk / fruit / white bread / crumpet

Some people with gastroparesis may need nutritional supplement drinks if they are at risk of malnutrition.

If you are losing weight despite making dietary changes and taking nutritional supplements you may benefit from a feeding tube. Your dietitian will advise you on this.

Where to go for further information

If you are concerned that you are losing weight or feel that you need to speak to a Dietitian, please contact the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics on Telephone: **0151 529 3473**.

Additional information about gastroparesis can be found on the following website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gastroparesis/pages/introduction.aspx>



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0151 529 2906
listening@aintree.nhs.uk