

Patient information

Dietary Management of Strictures and Adhesions

Nutrition and Dietetics Department – Therapies Aintree Hospital

What are strictures and adhesions?

A **stricture** occurs when inflammation causes the bowel wall to thicken leading to narrowing of the bowel. Sometimes strictures can develop from scar tissue (fibrosis) from previous inflammation. Strictures vary in length and the degree of narrowing. Multiple strictures can also develop.

Adhesions are bands of scar tissue that form inside your abdomen and can cause the tissues in the abdomen to stick together. This can result in partial or complete blockage of the bowel.

Common symptoms

Strictures and adhesions can cause the bowel to narrow. Passage of food through the narrowed sections of your bowel can be difficult and cause blockages.

This can cause the following symptoms:

- Abdominal pain
- Cramps
- Bloating after eating

If your bowel becomes completely obstructed, this can cause severe pain, nausea and vomiting.

How are strictures managed?

The type of treatment depends on the type of stricture. Strictures that cause more mild symptoms can be managed with changes to your diet. More severe strictures may also require medical or surgical treatment.

Why is it important to change your diet with a stricture or adhesions?

If you have a mass in your intestine or it is narrower than normal, you may be at risk of a blockage. To help minimise this risk, try to eat your food slowly and chew it thoroughly. Some foods are more likely to become stuck and cause abdominal pain and bloating.

These include:

- Skins, pips and seeds of fruit or vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Beans or pulses
- Tough meat

What can I eat?

Depending on your situation, you may need to make more changes than others. Your dietitian will provide advice on food choices that are suitable for you based on the severity of your symptoms.

Generally, foods that are easy to manage include softer, mashed or puréed meals. Fibre makes our stools form a 'bulk' and makes them solid and harder to pass. This is why we encourage a low fibre diet. Examples of suitable foods are suggested in the tables on the following pages.

What if I cannot manage any solid food?

If your stricture or adhesions are severe or if you have a partial obstruction, you can experience nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain when eating solid foods. If this is the case, you might be advised to follow a liquid diet for a short period of time to help minimise your symptoms.

What should I do if I am losing weight?

If you find that your symptoms are stopping you from eating enough food, you may lose weight. The following suggestions might help to minimise weight loss:

- Start slowly and gradually eat more as you feel able
- Eat slowly and chew food thoroughly
- Eat small frequent meals, aiming for 6 small meals a day (start with ½ portions and build up)
- Avoid large quantities of fluid and drink only nutritious drinks e.g., milky drinks instead of tea and coffee
- Consume fluids between meals rather than with them

Increase foods high in sugar, fat and protein e.g., full cream milk, full fat yoghurts, adding butter or cheese to soups and mashed potato, smoothies, custard or rice pudding.

Type	Suitable Foods	Foods to eat to tolerance	Foods to avoid
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be eaten freely. • Include a variety to provide the nutrients that you need and to keep your diet interesting <p>Well cooked root vegetables like carrots, swede parsnips.</p> <p>All kinds of potatoes without skins.</p> <p>Tomatoes without skins or pips such as tomato juice, tinned deseeded tomatoes, passata, tomato purée</p>	<p>Well cooked vegetables, with no stringy parts or stalks.</p> <p>These should be suitable if they can be passed through a sieve such as cauliflower florets and green vegetables e.g. spinach, sprouts, broccoli florets, mushrooms.</p> <p>Skinned and deseeded cucumber.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fibrous foods with high risk of becoming stuck and causing pain and bloating <p>Sweetcorn, broad beans.</p> <p>Raw vegetables such as peppers, radishes, celery.</p> <p>Potato skins. Cabbage. Leeks. Onions.</p> <p>Lettuce and most salad leaves.</p>
Beans and Pulses	<p>Well cooked and smooth puréed or mashed beans and lentils, for example hummus.</p>	<p>Soft, well cooked beans and lentils without skins, for example marrowfat peas, lentil soup, yellow split peas.</p>	<p>Firm beans and pulses with course skins like kidney beans, baked beans, haricot beans, barlotti beans, soy beans or chickpeas.</p>
Fruit	<p>Fruit juice.</p> <p>Cooked or stewed fruit without the skin.</p> <p>Tinned pears, peaches, apricots.</p> <p>Puréed fruit and fruit coulis.</p>	<p>Fruit that has been peeled with seeds/pips removed such as pears, apples, peaches, plums, apricots, grapes.</p> <p>Bananas.</p> <p>Tinned citrus fruit with no pith, skin or pips for example mandarins or grapefruit.</p>	<p>All dried fruit.</p> <p>Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries.</p>

Type	Suitable Foods	Foods to eat to tolerance	Foods to avoid
Cereals and Grains	<p>Rice Krispies, cornflakes, Sugar Puffs, Ready Brek.</p> <p>Products made from white flour, for example white bread, white pasta, crumpets, English muffins.</p> <p>Plain and chocolate biscuits like rich tea, nice, cream crackers. Plain cakes, plain scones, plain muffins.</p> <p>Rice pudding, semolina, tapioca, plain couscous, polenta.</p>	<p>Porridge, Weetabix, Shreddies, Oatibix.</p> <p>Products made from wholemeal flour, for example wholemeal and brown bread without seeds, brown pasta, wholemeal muffins.</p> <p>Wholemeal biscuits such as digestives.</p> <p>Well cooked white rice.</p>	<p>Cereals containing nuts, seeds or dried fruit such as muesli, fruit and fibre,</p> <p>Shredded Wheat, bran flakes.</p> <p>Products made from flour that contain fruit, seeds or nuts such as multigrain bread, seeded batch or muffins containing dried fruit, seeds or nuts.</p> <p>Biscuits with nuts, seeds or grains for example nut cookies, seeded crisp breads, Hobnobs, rough oatcakes.</p> <p>Fruit cakes, fruit scones, muesli bars and flapjacks or muffins containing dried fruit, seeds or nuts.</p> <p>Brown rice.</p>
Meat and Poultry	Soft tender meat or poultry	Tough meat products such as sausages and beef burgers. Meat pies.	Tough, gristly meat or skin
Fish	Fish without bones. Seafood (ensure prawns and shrimps are peeled).	Fish with bones that mash like sardines.	Fish with thin, edible bones such as whitebait, kippers. Fish skin
Meat Alternatives	Plain tofu, TVP, Quorn. Eggs.		Meat alternatives served in sauces or marinades that contain other foods that have been listed in the “foods to be avoided” column such as vegetables, beans or pulses.

Type	Suitable Foods	Foods to eat to tolerance	Foods to Avoid
Dairy	All types of milk. Butter, margarine. Most cheeses. Most yoghurts.		Cheese containing dried fruit or nuts. Yoghurts containing dried fruit or nuts.
Miscellaneous	Clear, cream or strained soups. Sugar, honey, syrup, seedless jam, marmalade, chocolate. Oxo, Bovril, salt, pepper, herbs. Ice cream, jelly, blancmange. Smooth condiments like tomato ketchup, smooth mustard.		Chocolate with fruit or nuts. Nuts, seeds, coconut. Marmalade with peel. Pickles and chutney. Wholegrain mustard.

Will I get constipated on this diet?

Depending on how severe your stricture or adhesions are you may still be able to include some fibre in your diet, however, if you are concerned about becoming constipated or if you are unable to open your bowel, contact your doctor for advice.

Do I need nutritional supplement drinks?

Your dietitian may recommend that you include a nutritional supplement drink to try to minimise your weight loss. These are available on prescription from your GP which your dietitian will organise.

Name of supplement: _____ Quantity recommended: _____

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

If you need any further information please contact the Nutrition and Dietetics Department
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