Healthy Eating Guidelines for People who have an Ileostomy

The information in this handout will help you once you are ready to eat solid foods after ileostomy surgery. It provides advice on preventing food blockages, avoiding dehydration, healthy eating, and managing odours, gas and a high output from your ileostomy.

If you have concerns about your diet, speak with your dietitian. If you are experiencing discomfort or think you may have a blockage, speak to your doctor right away, or go to the nearest emergency room.

Steps you can take

1. Prevent food blockages at the stoma.
   - Always chew your food well.
   - **For the first 6 to 8 weeks after surgery**, avoid the following foods because they are hard to digest and can increase the risk of food blockage.
     - Vegetables and Fruit:
       - chinese bean sprouts
       - coconut
       - dried fruit
       - fibrous fruits and vegetables (e.g. membranes of oranges and other citrus fruits, celery, pineapple)
       - mushrooms
       - peas, snow peas
       - skins of vegetables and fruits (tomato skins, potato skins, apple skins)
       - whole corn, popcorn.
     - Meats and Alternatives:
       - legumes such as beans (black, kidney, navy), peas
(chick, split, pigeon) and lentils
- meat casings (sausages, wiener)
- tough or stringy meat
- whole nuts and seeds (not including smooth nut and seed butters).

1. **After 6 to 8 weeks, once your stoma has healed**, you can introduce the foods listed above into your diet. Do this one type of food at a time. This will help you see the effects of each food on your ileostomy output.

   - Start with small amounts of well-cooked foods. Cooked foods are easier to digest than raw.
   - If you tolerate the food, increase the amount the next time.
   - Don’t forget to chew your food well.

2. **Stay well hydrated.**

   - Drink fluids throughout the day. Do not try to control your ileostomy output by limiting your fluid intake, especially during the first 6 to 8 weeks after the surgery while your body adapts to the ileostomy. If your output is more than one litre (4 cups) a day, follow the tips in the chart below.

   - Good fluid choices include:
     - water
     - milk or milk alternatives
     - 100% fruit juices, diluted
     - herbal or weak tea.

   - If your urine is a dark colour or your mouth is dry, it could mean that you are not drinking enough and need to drink more. Light yellow coloured urine usually means that you have had enough to drink.

3. **Follow a healthy diet.**

   - Use Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide at [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide). It provides advice about the type and amounts of foods you need each day to plan a healthy well balanced diet.
Talk to your dietitian or doctor about whether you need a vitamin or mineral supplement. This will depend on how much and what part of your intestine was removed.

4. Manage your symptoms.

If you have odour, gas or a high stool output from your ileostomy, try the following tips. If some foods give you problems, stop eating them for a couple of weeks to see if it makes a difference. If it does not help, add the food back into your diet. Find out what works for you. Everyone is different.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Tips to Try</th>
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| Odour     | Try limiting these foods to help decrease odour:  
   - asparagus  
   - broccoli  
   - eggs  
   - fish  
   - garlic  
   - onion  
   - spiced foods.  

Try adding these foods to help decrease odour:  
   - buttermilk  
   - fresh parsley  
   - yogurt.  

Try a pouch deodorizer. Talk to a pharmacist, nurse or your doctor about this. |
| Gas       | Try limiting these foods to reduce gas:  
   - cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower  
   - legumes (beans, peas and lentils) |
onions
sprouts
beer
carbonated beverages
coffee
dairy products.

Try the following suggestions to reduce swallowing air and producing gas:

- Eat slowly.
- Chew your food well.
- Don't skip meals.
- Eat small meals throughout the day.
- Avoid talking while eating.
- Don't smoke.
- Avoid chewing gum.
- Avoid drinking with a straw.
- Avoid carbonated beverages.

| High Output: more than 1 litre (4 cups) per day | Add 1-2 extra litres (4-8 cups) of fluid each day. Good choices are: water, milk or milk alternatives, diluted 100% fruit juices, herbal or weak tea
Add 5 mL (1 tsp) of salt throughout the day. You can do this by sprinkling salt on your food and choosing saltier items such as canned soups or crackers.
Include potassium rich foods such as bananas, diluted orange juice, potatoes, tomato juice, milk and milk alternatives.
Do not restrict your fluids to control a high ostomy output. This could lead to dehydration or worsen existing dehydration.
Speak to your doctor or dietitian if you continue to
have a high stool output. They may recommend an oral rehydration drink or have other dietary suggestions.

If you are still having problems, try keeping a food diary. It can help you remember what you ate and any symptoms you had. To keep a food diary write down:

- What you eat and drink.
- The time you have food or drink.
- Any symptoms you have.

Review your food diary to help find any foods or drinks that may be causing you problems.

**Additional Resources**


These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.