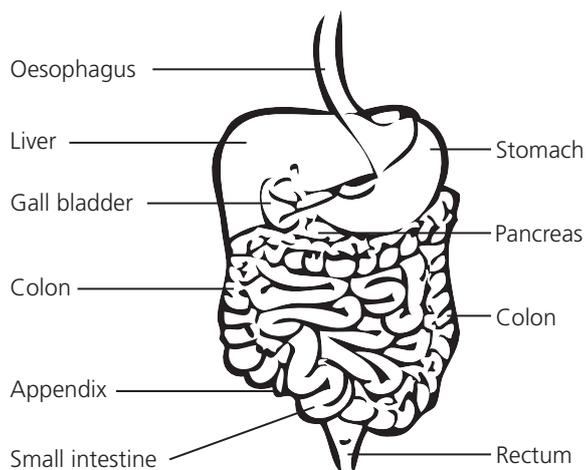


Dietary Advice for People with a Colostomy

Dietary Advice for people with a Colostomy

If you have a Colostomy then it means that part of your large bowel (colon) has been removed. You will continue to digest and absorb your food normally in your small bowel, but your large bowel is where water and salt are absorbed and therefore, the amount absorbed depends on the amount of large bowel you have left. Over time your small bowel will take over this function and you should be able to absorb water and salt normally.



What can I eat?

Having a colostomy doesn't mean that you need to have a special diet.

You can have a normal, well balanced diet. However, you may find certain foods or drinks upset you. As each person is different, some foods may be tolerated by one person but not the next.

This leaflet is designed to give you handy hints and tips on how to make sure your diet is nutritionally adequate and enjoyable.

What should I eat immediately post my operation?

Post operatively, you may find that it takes some time to build up your oral intake. Due to this, it is recommended that initially you have light foods which have a high fluid content (can also be referred to as free fluids) and build up your oral intake as tolerated. Light foods include:

- Custards
- Yoghurts
- Ice-cream
- Soup

Some patients find that they are able to increase what they have over the first few days but don't worry if you can't as often it can take longer. The nurses on the ward can offer you milkshakes (Meritene) which contain added nutrients to help nourish you while you build up your diet. If you lose weight or struggle to build up your diet the nurses can refer you to a dietitian for further support.

You may also find that the output from your stoma is loose and watery; this can happen in the short term after surgery. It is therefore recommended you follow a low fibre diet (also referred to as a low residue diet). For further information see the section later "What should I eat if my output increases and is watery?"

This diet only needs to be followed until the output from your stoma has settled down and you are feeling comfortable dealing with your colostomy. You should be then able to start increasing the variety in your diet.

What changes do I need to make to my diet?

- Many people with a colostomy can eat whatever they like. However, some people find certain foods can alter their stoma output. Finding out which foods affect you can be hit and miss at first, but the following is designed to give you some guidance.
- If you find a certain food to be problematic (i.e. it causes increased wind or output) then cut that food out of your diet for a few days and reintroduce it again, to check it wasn't a one off. If the symptoms persist, then it is best to avoid that food. Ideally, only introduce one new food at a time so any symptoms can be linked to a certain food.

General tips

- To help your digestion, take time over your meals and chew your food well.
- Eat regularly. Have three meals a day with snacks and drinks between if necessary - 'little and often'.
- A varied diet, with foods from all the food groups (fruit and vegetables, fats, protein and carbohydrates) will ensure that you receive adequate nutrition.

Meal pattern

Meal pattern is very individual and may be affected by social circumstance.

- Try to develop a regular eating pattern.
- Smaller meals may be better tolerated, particularly in the first few weeks after surgery, when it is important to eat little and often to ensure adequate intake.
- Avoid heavy meals or snacks before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine drinks before bedtime as they can over stimulate the gut which may increase your stoma output i.e. coffee, cola, tea.

Healthy eating

Once your colostomy begins to adapt and you become used to its normal function, you will feel more confident to experiment with food and many people find they can enjoy a full and varied diet.

Choosing a healthy diet

No one food contains all the nutrients needed for health so you should choose a variety of foods from each food group, discussed below.

Protein foods

These are essential for health and repair of body tissues.

- Meat
- Fish
- Eggs
- Beans, baked beans, peas, lentils
- Nut products
- Meat alternative - Quorn, tofu

Include 2 portions from this list each day. Red meats, liver, kidney, oily fish, eggs and pulses are good sources of iron.

Dairy produce

Dairy foods are good sources of calcium, which is important for healthy bones. These foods also provide protein and some vitamins. Try to have three servings per day. A serving includes a 200ml glass of milk or calcium fortified alternative, a 125ml pot of yogurt and matchbox size piece of cheese. For general health low fat choices are recommended.

Starchy foods

These provide energy, vitamins and fibre. Examples include:

- Bread, chapattis, wraps, pitas etc.
- Breakfast cereals, oats
- Pasta
- Rice

- Potatoes, sweet potatoes
- Plantains, green bananas, yam

Include a variety of foods from this group and make them the main part of your meals.

Fruits and vegetables

These provide fibre and a range of vitamins and minerals that are essential for good health. Choose a wide variety and try to eat three-five portions per day.

A portion is two tablespoons of vegetables, a small salad, a piece of fruit like an apple or banana, two tablespoons of stewed/tinned fruit or a small glass (150ml) of fruit juice.

If you find that some fruits and vegetables upset you, then try:

- Peeled fruits
- Tinned fruits in natural juice
- Stewed, baked or pureed fruits
- Fruit juices (unsweetened)
- Well-cooked or pureed vegetables
- Vegetables in soup or casseroles, pureed if necessary

Fats and oils

These provide energy, essential fats and some vitamins, but too much fat is not good for health so use the following foods sparingly:

- Butter
- Margarine
- Low fat spreads
- Cooking oils
- Mayonnaise and oily salad dressings

Fats and sugars

The following foods contain fats and sugars and may be enjoyed as a treat, but try not to eat them too often and, when you do, have small amounts.

- Cakes, biscuits
- Puddings, ice cream

- Chocolate, sweets
- Crisps
- Sugar, sweetened drinks

Alcohol

Excessive amounts of alcohol are not good for health. Some types, such as beer may increase your output.

If you drink alcohol, take it in moderation: men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than 14 units per week. Spread your drinking out over the week with several alcohol free days each week.

One unit is equal to half a pint of average strength beer, a single pub measure of spirit (25mls), a small glass of sherry or a small glass of wine (125mls).

Commonly asked questions

I'm experiencing a lot of wind. What causes this?

At first your stoma will pass more wind (flatus) than usual, but this soon reduces, especially once you begin to eat 'normally'.

Wind is a normal by product of digestion, but it may be increased by swallowing air whilst eating or by eating fibrous foods.

Foods that may cause wind:

- Green vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cabbage)
- Beans and pulses
- Onions and garlic
- Carbonated drinks e.g. coca cola, sparkling water
- Beer

You may reduce the wind caused by swallowed air by:

- Eating regular meals in a relaxed environment
- Eating slowly and chewing food carefully
- Pouring fizzy drinks (if taken) into a glass, stirring and leaving to stand for 10 minutes before drinking

You should also avoid:

- Taking drinks through a straw
- Long periods without food
- Smoking
- Talking when eating
- Chewing gum

What should I eat if my output increases and is watery?

An increased watery output can happen post operatively or can be a result of a variety of things, such as a stomach bug, stress, antibiotics or spicy foods. A liquid output increases the risk of becoming dehydrated and losing salts called electrolytes.

High fibre foods and some other foods may make your colostomy output more liquid especially if eaten in large quantities. See the table below for foods to reduce and alternatives

FOODS TO REDUCE	FOODS ALLOWED
Vegetables	
Beansprouts, bamboo shoots, lettuce, celery, green leafy vegetables (i.e. kale, cabbage), sweetcorn, tomato skins and seeds, any raw vegetables, vegetables with skins on	Peeled and well cooked carrots, swede, beetroot, courgette, squash, sieved tomato (passata)
Fruit	
Pineapple, dried fruits, dried or fresh coconut, fruit with skin on, fruit juice	Tinned fruit e.g. tinned peaches, mandarins is a better alternative to fresh fruit or have peeled and stewed fruit i.e. stewed apples , oranges (without skins, pith and pips). Bananas can help to thicken output

Breads and cereals	
Wholemeal and granary bread, Weetabix, muesli, Bran flakes, Shredded wheat, porridge. Brown rice and brown pasta	White bread, Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, white rice, white pasta, potatoes (no skins)
Dairy	
Cheese with nuts in, yogurts with added fibre grains	Milk, cheese , butter, cream
FOODS TO REDUCE	FOODS ALLOWED
Cakes and biscuits	
Digestives, Hobnobs, fruit cake, carrot cake	Rich tea, plain shortbread, malted milk, victoria sponge, madeira cake
Meat, fish and eggs	
All allowed	
Miscellaneous	
Jam/marmalade with bits, nuts, chocolate with fruit and nuts, spicy food, deep fried food	Seedless jam or no shred marmalade. Jelly babies, marshmallows, smooth peanut butter

Foods highlighted in bold are especially useful to help to thicken the stoma output

It may also help to decrease your intake of water and tea/coffee. Drinking water on it's own can be difficult for your bowel to absorb and therefore can increase your stoma output. Tea and coffee contain caffeine which can speed up your bowel motions and also increase your stoma output. Do however replace these fluids with cordial, sugar containing squash and milk etc. It is important to stay well hydrated to help ensure that you pass good amounts of urine.

When your output is very loose, you are at risk of losing salt therefore you may need to add salt to your diet. If you are unable to eat meals, try taking salt in the form of meat extract drinks such as Oxo, Bovril and eat dry savoury crackers.

This diet only needs to be followed until your output has settled down and you are feeling comfortable dealing with your colostomy. You

should be then able to start increasing the variety in your diet.

If you have any concerns please contact your stoma nurse or Dietitian

I sometimes see food particles in my bag is this normal?

Yes, sometimes food will pass through unaltered, particularly foods such as sweetcorn. Do not worry if this happens. To prevent blockages, you may want to avoid these foods.

What happens if I get constipated?

Constipation is largely due to a lack of dietary fibre, inadequate fluid intake and some types of painkillers or immobility. To prevent constipation, eat regularly, slowly increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in your diet, take gentle exercise; ensure that you drink 1½ - 2 litres (3-4 pints) daily, unless specifically advised otherwise.

My colostomy output is offensive smelling. Is there anything I can do to prevent this?

Certain foods can cause more odour than others. Foods such as asparagus, baked beans, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage and eggs may cause a problem for some people.

You may wish to try omitting these foods to see if this reduces the problem, but remember that you can only smell the faeces when you change the appliance.

There are foods that may help to reduce the odour from your colostomy. Peppermint oil capsules, yoghurt, parsley and buttermilk can help to reduce the smell for some people. A soluble aspirin or some vanilla essence can be placed in the colostomy bag to prevent troublesome odours.

Vinegar added to fish dishes helps to eliminate the traditional fishy odour and also helps to get rid of fish smells when the bag is changed.

What shall I do if I have a poor appetite?

Following surgery, some people find their appetite is poor and they don't feel like eating much. This is usually temporary but your dietitian can supply you with some practical and written information to help add extra nourishment to your diet. Try to eat small and frequent meals and snacks e.g. every two hours.

- Be positive about what you do eat – every extra mouthful helps.
- Try not to get out of the habit of eating. You actually need to eat to stimulate your appetite.
- Your appetite may come and go, so it is important to make the most of the times when you feel like eating.
- Don't worry if it isn't 'normal' foods at 'normal' times – if you fancy cereal at midnight, enjoy it.
- Try to relax and enjoy what you eat. Eat slowly and chew your food well, trying to rest before and afterwards.
- A short walk before a meal or some fresh air may help improve your appetite.

If you have any specific problems, for example:

- Unwanted weight loss
- Constipation
- Persistent and unusually loose stools

Please contact your Stoma Care Nurse or Dietitian

Useful contacts

Dietitian:

Area J, Level 0
Therapy Department
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital Foundation
Trust
Barrack Road
Wonford
EX2 5DW

01392 402044

**Further information can be obtained
from:**

The British Colostomy Association (BCA)

15 Station Road,
Reading,
Berkshire,
RG1 1LG

Tel: 0118 9391537

*Written information cannot replace personalised
recommendations. For further advice please
seek a dietetic referral from your consultant or
GP*

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if
the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

© Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust

Designed by Graphics (Print & Design), RD&E