

# How to follow a low residue diet

Information and advice for patients

## *Nutrition and Dietetics*

This information is for people who need a low residue diet.

### **What is a low residue diet?**

A low residue diet contains foods that are easy to digest. On a low residue diet it is necessary to avoid foods with a high fibre content.

### **Why do I need a low residue diet?**

You may need to follow a low residue diet for one of the following reasons:

- You have a narrowing of the gut (sometimes called a stricture) which means fibre containing foods may not pass through effectively and therefore may cause a blockage.
- You have an inflammation of the lining of the gut wall caused by a disease or by radiotherapy which means that fibre containing foods may aggravate the gut and lead to diarrhoea.
- As a way to prepare your bowel before certain medical investigations or procedures.

In the above instances food is not the cause of the problems but avoiding higher fibre foods may make you feel more comfortable. There is always some trial and error and you may find that you can tolerate small amounts of fibre which will help to make your meals more varied and interesting.

A low residue diet is usually used as a short term measure only, so keep asking your doctor or dietitian if you still need to follow this diet.

### **Examples of high fibre foods you need to avoid**

- Bread - wholemeal, high bran, granary, high fibre white or half/half wholegrain and white mixes
- Wholemeal pittas and chapattis
- Wholemeal scones, crumpets and muffins
- Cereal bars, digestive biscuits, fruit cake and fig rolls
- Wholemeal lasagne and pasta
- Brown rice
- High fibre or bran crispbreads and crackers
- Wholemeal, wholegrain, bran or high fibre cereals, porridge and muesli
- Nuts

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- Vegetables and salad – raw, cooked, tinned or frozen especially the skins and stalks
- Fruit – fresh, frozen, tinned, cooked and dried especially skins
- Beans, lentils and chick peas
- Potatoes with skin on (boiled, baked, roast, chipped)

## **Practical ways to reduce your fibre intake**

- Choose white cereals such as cornflakes or rice based cereals (ideally one fortified in vitamins).
- Choose white varieties of rice and pasta.
- Choose plain white biscuits such as rich tea, custard creams, nice or malted milks.
- Choose white varieties of bread, crumpets and scones.
- Try to avoid the skins of potatoes.
- If you do some home baking try to use white flour.
- All fruit, vegetables and salad items contain fibre especially those which have skins, seeds and pips. Some people find that they can tolerate well boiled or pureed vegetables and fruit but trial cautiously.
- Be careful of added vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds in ready bought soups, sauces and convenience/ready made meals.
- Include vitamin C containing fruit squash or a small glass of fresh fruit juice (without bits) to help get a balanced diet while you are restricting a lot of fruit and vegetables.

## **Example of a low residue diet**

### **Breakfast**

- Cornflakes or rice based cereal
- White toast/crumpet/bagel/muffin
- Fruit juice (no bits/smooth)

### **Mid Morning**

- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water
- White biscuits (rich tea/arrowroot)

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### **Lunch (or Evening Meal)**

- Well cooked tender meat, fish, cheese or egg
- White bread/pitta
- Well cooked salad or vegetables
- Stewed fruit or fruit juice (no bits)
- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water

### **Mid Afternoon**

- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water

### **Evening Meal (or Lunch)**

- Well cooked tender meat, fish, cheese or egg
- Potatoes (no skin), white pasta/rice/bread/chapattis
- Well cooked vegetables
- Stewed fruit or fruit juice (no bits)
- Tea, coffee, fruit squash or water

### **Supper**

- Tea, coffee or hot milky drink
- White scone/toast/cereal or biscuit

## **How long will I need to follow a low residue diet for?**

The length of time you will need to follow the low residue diet for will depend on the reason you need the diet for. For example, if you are having radiotherapy you will need to continue with the diet for around 2 weeks or until your diarrhoea has resolved before you re-introduce more fibre into your diet. Your nurse, dietitian, doctor or radiographer will give you more detail on how long you need to follow a low residue diet for.

## **How do I follow this diet if I am vegetarian or have other food intolerances?**

If you do not eat meat or fish or have other food intolerances please ask to be referred for individual advice from a dietitian. You should also ask your doctor if you need to be referred to dietitian if you are not eating well or are losing weight before or after starting a low residue diet.

## **Will I miss out on important nutrients on this diet?**

A low residue diet is not normally used for a long enough time period to cause long term nutritional deficiencies. If you are on this diet for an extended period your doctor may recommend a multivitamin/mineral supplement.

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### Contact details

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: 0121 507 4085

### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

B.Thomas & J.Bishop, Manual of Dietetic Practice (4th edition), 2007

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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