

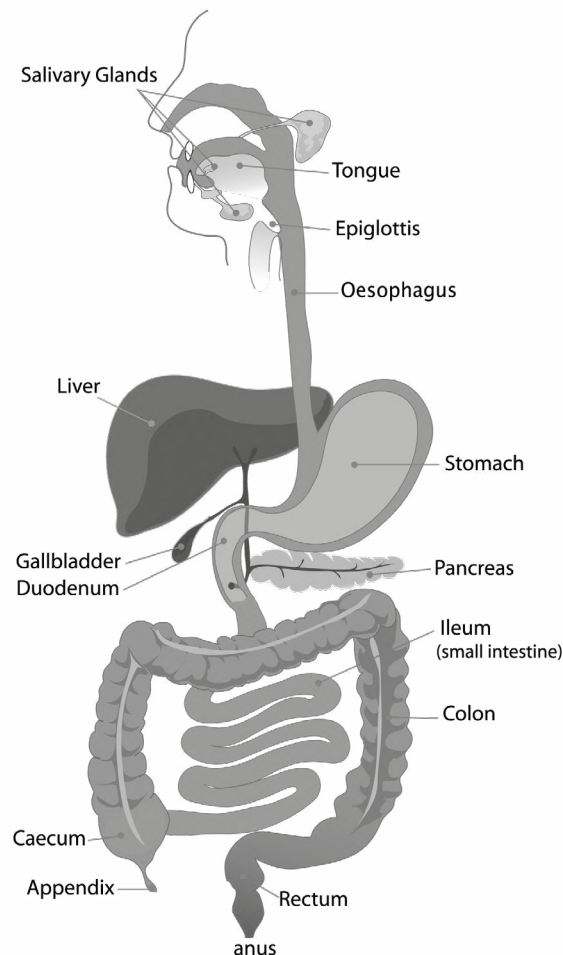
# Dietary Advice Following an Ileostomy

Information and advice for patients

Nutrition and Dietetic Department

## What is an ileostomy?

An ileostomy is made by taking part of your small intestine (the ileum) and bringing this to the surface of your skin to form an opening. This opening is called a Stoma.



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## What happens during healthy Digestion?

During healthy digestion, food is mixed with digestive juices and broken down as it moves through the digestive system. The digestive system includes the mouth, oesophagus, stomach, small bowel (ileum), large bowel (colon), rectum and anus.

Digestion begins with chewing and swallowing food. The food passes into the stomach where it is mixed with digestive acids that break it down.

The stomach contents travel into the small bowel where nutrients are absorbed.

Waste products are pushed into the large bowel (colon), where water is removed to form a stool which leaves the body via the rectum and then anus.

Now that you have an ileostomy, your body absorbs nutrients differently. After nutrients from your food have been absorbed into the small bowel, the waste products and wind are passed through your ileostomy into your 'stoma' bag. As the digested food does not go via your large bowel, your stools may be looser than before.

## **Why am I producing so much fluid through my stoma?**

The large bowel removes excess water. When you have an ileostomy, your stool will be very wet because it will not have had excess water removed. Therefore, it will still be very wet when it passes through your ileostomy into your stoma. Because your body does not absorb this excess water through your large bowel, it is vital that you drink plenty of fluids.

## **How should my stoma output look?**

It takes time for your stoma to function and so there may be a high fluids output at first. Gradually your bowel should adapt, and your fluid loss should reduce – monitor this progress and report any concerns to your stoma nurse who will provide personalised advice. The consistency is normally like porridge, although this may change throughout the day depending on how much food you have eaten. Everyone's output is different, so it is important to know what is 'normal' for you.

## **Healthy Eating with an Ileostomy**

Healthy eating is important for us all and you should continue to follow a balanced diet for good health. Everyone's tolerance to different foods varies, so monitor your reactions to foods to understand your tolerance. Follow the advice below to help you enjoy the foods you eat.

- Eat at regular times, avoid long gaps between meals.
- Enjoy your meals in a relaxed atmosphere.
- Sit down, preferably at a table.
- If you wear dentures, make sure they fit properly.
- Chew your food thoroughly.
- Drink after you have eaten, not with your food.

## **Ileostomy and blockages**

Your ileostomy may occasionally become blocked with undigested food. Some people have experienced this in the first 6 – 8 weeks following a stoma formation. The best way to avoid blockages is to chew your food well, take your time when eating and drink plenty of fluid after you have eaten. Keeping a diary of the food you eat and any symptoms you experience can help to identify foods that cause you problems so they can be avoided.

The list below contains foods that commonly cause blockages:

- Sweetcorn and peas
- Beans and lentils
- Orange/grapefruit pith
- Mushrooms
- Pineapple
- Beansprouts
- Celery
- Tomato skins and pips
- Fruit peel
- Raw or desiccated coconut (coconut milk is ok)
- Thick stalks of broccoli and cauliflower
- Nuts and larger seeds
- Popcorn

### **Some foods may cause wind**

There are some foods that may cause wind through your stoma, this is more likely with foods that caused wind from before you had your ileostomy. You will experience some wind initially, but if it persists the following tips should help.

- Chew your food well.
- Try to avoid swallowing air while you eat.
- Try to avoid talking when you are chewing.
- Eat regularly and avoid long gaps between meals.

Food and drinks most likely to cause wind:

- Pulses such as lentils, peas and beans
- Brussels sprouts and cabbage
- Chewing gum
- Beer and fizzy drinks (stir these drinks and then allow them to stand for about 10 minutes to reduce the 'fizz' before drinking)

### **Odours/smells**

If your stoma bag is correctly applied, then you should not experience any smells. However, there are some foods that may increase the smell from your output, so you may want to avoid the following if that affects you.

- Onions (particularly raw)
- Garlic
- Cauliflower
- Cabbage

- Sprouts
- Spicy foods
- Eggs

A few drops of vanilla essence, deodorant powders or sprays in your stoma bag may help with odour. Discuss this with your stoma nurse who can recommend where you can buy these.

## **Foods which may cause your output to be loose**

If you have noticed an increase in your stoma output and it has become loose, your body will lose more water and salt. This increases your risk of dehydration. If this happens, it is important to replace lost fluids by drinking water, tea, isotonic sports drinks, and rehydration sachets (ask your pharmacist for more advice). Adding salt to your meals will also help to replace any lost salt.

To avoid diarrhoea:

- Have no more than 5 pieces of fruit and vegetables per day.
- Avoid spicy foods.
- Have no more than 150ml of fruit juice per day.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Limit your caffeine intake – have no more than 3 – 4 cups of tea/coffee per day.
- Limit your intake of sweeteners such as those found in diet and fizzy drinks, no-added sugar squash, sugar free sweets/chewing gum.
- Reduce high fibre foods such as wholegrain cereals (e.g. Weetabix, Bran flakes, Porridge), and wholemeal, wholegrain or granary bread, lentils, pulses, and beans.

If you think that the high output is due to an illness, stomach upset or food poisoning, or if it continues for more than 24 hours, contact your doctor, stoma care nurse or local chemotherapy unit (if applicable)

## **Foods that may help thicken your output**

If you think the increase in your output is due to a change in your food/fluids or daily routine, it has been suggested that the following foods may help:

- Low – fibre starchy foods; white bread, Rice Krispies, cornflakes, potatoes (with no skins), white pasta, white rice, cream crackers, and water biscuits.
- Add salt to your food.
- Salty foods such as crisps, crackers, pretzels, bacon, and cheese.
  - Foods that contain gelatine, for example marshmallows and jelly babies.
  - Under ripe bananas.
  - Smooth nut pastes, for example peanut, almond or cashew butter.

## Poor Appetite

If you are struggling with eating or have lost weight, a few simple changes to your meals and snacks can make a difference.

- Eat small, frequent meals with snacks in-between.
- Take drinks after your meals, not before to avoid feeling full.
- Use full-fat milk. Try to use a pint of full-fat milk every day in cereals, drinks, puddings etc. You can make this more nourishing by mixing 1 pint with 2 – 4 tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder.
- Try full-fat or thick and creamy yoghurts – avoid diet and low-fat varieties.
- Add margarine or butter to mashed potatoes and generously spread it on bread/crackers/scones/pancakes.
- Mix grated cheese or cream into soups, scrambled eggs and sauces.
- Use mayonnaise, salad cream and dressings generously.

If you continue to have problems with eating please contact your stoma nurse, district nurse, practice nurse, GP, or Dietitian.

## Suggested meal plan ONE

This meal plan is for guidance during the first few weeks following your ileostomy formation.

### Breakfast

- Cereal such as cornflakes or rice Krispies with milk.
- White bread/toast with spread, seedless jam or shred less marmalade.

### Lunch

- White bread sandwich/roll with cold meat/cheese/eggs/tuna.
- Baked potatoes (do not eat the skin) with tuna and/or cheese.
- Omelette (plain or cheese) and white bread.
- Scrambled/poached egg on white toast.

### Evening meal

- Meat, chicken, or fish; these could be in any form including sliced cold meats, casseroles, stews or cooked in a sauce. Minced or convenience foods such as sausages, burgers, fishcakes or fish fingers.
- Vegetarian dishes made with eggs or cheese; as an omelette, scrambled, poached, or boiled, macaroni cheese, grated cheese with baked potato.

Include some starchy foods such as potatoes (boiled, mashed, naked, roast, chips, croquettes – but do not eat the potato skin) boiled white rice or white pasta.

### Puddings

- Milk pudding such as rice pudding, semolina or custard
- Ice-cream or yoghurts
- Mousse

- Jelly
- Plain sponge with custard or cream

### **Snacks**

- Crackers and cheese
- Crisps
- Scones
- Biscuits
- Pancakes
- Yoghurts
- Milky drinks, for example Horlicks or hot chocolate
- Sponge cake

Once your output has been established, gradually include fibre into your diet. Meal plan TWO offers' suggestions on how to do this:

## **Suggested meal plan TWO**

### **Breakfast**

- 150ml fruit juice or piece of fruit.
- Cereal with milk.
- White or wholemeal bread/toast with spread, jam, or marmalade.

### **Lunch**

- Sandwich/roll with cold meat/cheese/eggs/tuna.
- Baked potato with tuna and/or cheese.
- Omelette and bread.
- Scrambled/poached egg on toast.
- Spaghetti on toast.

### **Evening meal**

- Meat, chicken, or fish; these could be in any form including cold slice meats, casseroles, stew or cooked in a sauce, minced or convenience foods such as sausages, burgers, fishcakes, or fish fingers.
- Vegetarian dishes made with eggs or cheese; as an omelette, scrambled, poached, or boiled, macaroni cheese, grated cheese with a baked potato.

Always include vegetables such as carrots turnip, peppers, parsnips, butternut squash or salad.

Include some starchy foods such as potatoes (boiled, mashed, baked, roast, chips, croquettes), boiled rice or pasta.

### **Puddings**

- Milk pudding such as rice pudding, semolina or custard

- Ice-cream or yoghurts
- Mousse
- Canned fruit
- Jelly
- Plain sponge, apple crumble, apple pie with custard or cream

### **Snacks**

- Crackers and cheese
- Crisps
- Scones
- Biscuits
- Pancakes
- Yoghurts
- Milky drinks, for example Horlicks or hot chocolate
- Sponge cake

### **Contact us**

SWBH Therapy Hub

Dietitians: 0121 507 4486 (option 2)

### **Further information**

#### **Ileostomy & Internal Pouch Association**

The national support group throughout the UK and Ireland supporting people living with an ileostomy or internal pouch, their families, friends, and carers.

[www.iasupport.org/](http://www.iasupport.org/)

NHS Website

#### **Ileostomy information**

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/ileostomy/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ileostomy/)

(Websites accessed 21 March 2024)

## Sources used for the information in this leaflet

LadyofHats. (2024) *Digestive system simplified*. Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Digestive\\_system\\_simplified.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Digestive_system_simplified.svg) (Accessed 21 March 2024)

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