

Nutrition and Dietetics

Dietary advice for people with an ileostomy

A leaflet designed to give you, your family and friends dietary information and helpful tips on foods to eat; now you have an ileostomy.

What is an ileostomy?

An ileostomy is a surgically created opening in the abdominal wall where your small bowel is brought to the surface. This procedure allows the waste products of digestion – such as poo (faeces) to leave your body without passing through the large bowel. The waste products are collected in a stoma bag attached to your skin.

After the operation

Having an ileostomy should not prevent you from having a varied diet. However, it is recommended that you introduce foods gradually as it takes several weeks for your body to adapt.

The change to your large bowel means you absorb less water and salt. This means you are more likely to have loose poos (stools) and a higher output in your bag (like diarrhoea). However, with time, your body will adapt and absorb more water and salt so your ileostomy output will become thicker.

- Aim to drink at least 1.5 - 2 litres / 3 pints of fluid each day
- Add extra salt to your meals



Patient Information

It is important to eat well while you are healing and recovering. Your appetite is likely to be smaller and may take a while to return. Try to:

- Eat little and often. Aim for 5 to 6 small meals and snacks per day
- Take your time and chew your food well to prevent blockages. Soft, moist foods may be easier to chew

Include protein and energy foods at each meal.

- Protein foods - meat, poultry, eggs, yoghurt, milk, cheese, soya & tofu
- Energy foods - white bread, low fibre cereals, white pasta, potatoes without skins & white rice

Avoid spicy, fried, and fibrous foods (such as nuts, pith, raw vegetables, mushrooms, coconut, seeds, skins on fruits and vegetables, salad, celery, pineapple, pips, peas, sweetcorn, dried fruit and mango). You can start eating these gradually later on.

Everyone is different, and the diet that works for someone else might not work for you.

After your ileostomy

As your body recovers from the operation, the smell and quantity of the output starts to calm down. Usually this is over a period of four to eight weeks. Once your output settles you will start to feel more confident to experiment with food and many people find they can enjoy the freedom of a full and varied diet. You should start to reintroduce foods to your tolerance, aiming for a healthy diet.

Continue to drink plenty of fluids and chew foods well to prevent potential blockages.

A healthy diet

The Eatwell Guide (on the next page) shows how much you should aim to eat from each food group. This includes everything you eat during the day, including snacks.

Patient Information

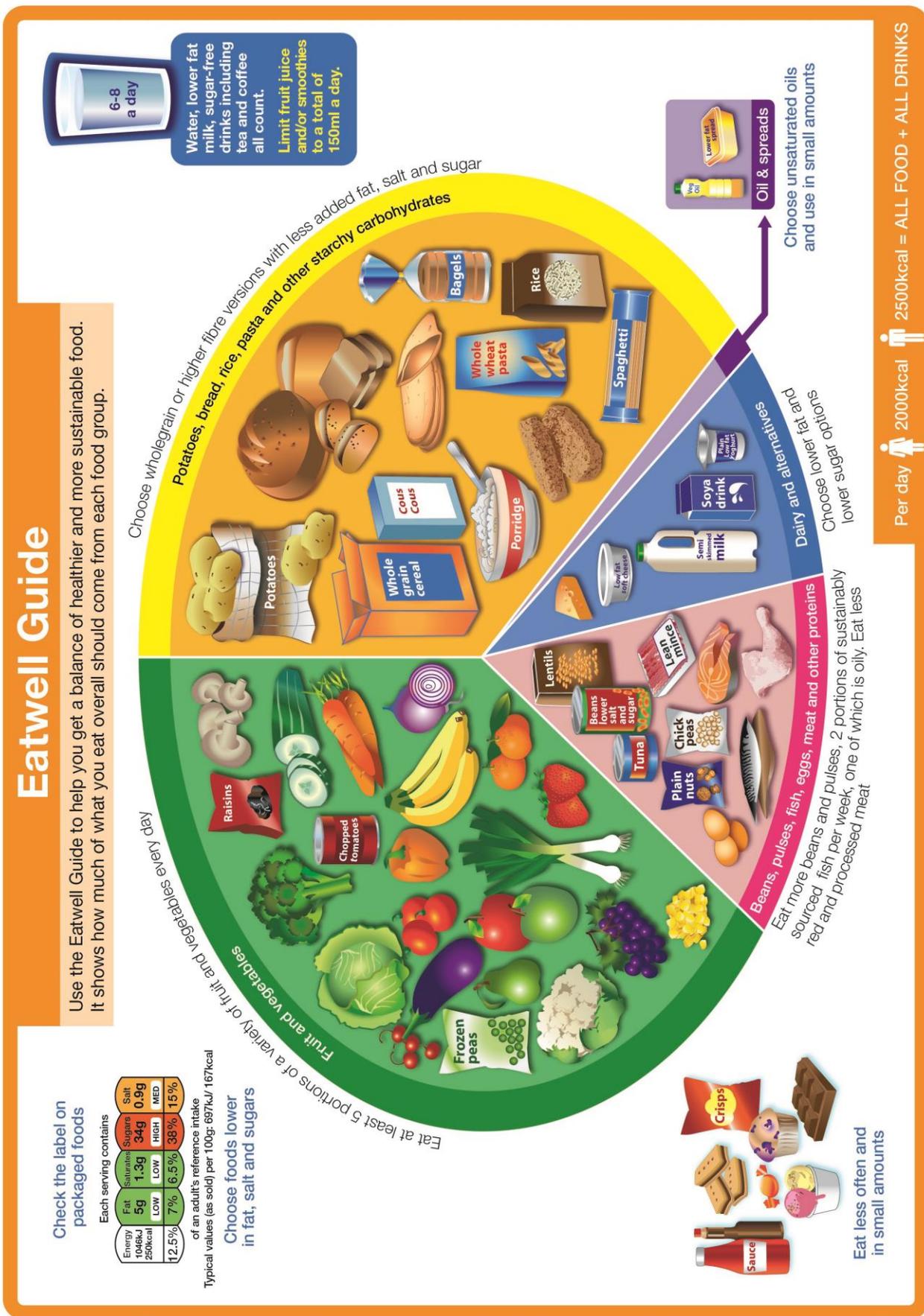
Aim to eat:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables – 5 portions a day (2 tablespoons of vegetables, 1 piece of a larger fruit such as apple or banana, 2 pieces of a smaller fruit such as plums, 150ml of fruit juice or 2 tablespoons of stewed/tinned fruit)
- plenty of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta, and other starchy foods, choose wholegrain varieties whenever you can
- some milk and dairy foods
- some meat, fish, eggs, beans, and other non-dairy sources of protein
- a small amount of foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar such as oils, butter, cakes or biscuits.
- a moderate salt intake (less than 6g per day)

Meal pattern

Your meal pattern will be individual to you and your family or circumstances.

- Try to develop a regular eating pattern that helps your ileostomy function.
- Aim to eat meals in a relaxed environment.
- Smaller meals may suit you better, but it is important to eat more often so that you are eating enough calories Late evening meals may increase ileostomy output during the night, some people may choose to eat earlier in the day or have a smaller evening meal.



Foods and their effects

There are no foods that you should avoid but some foods are linked with certain symptoms. Initially while your body adapts and you become more confident, you may prefer to try them when you are in a safe environment.

Symptom	Possible causes
Farting (Flatulence or wind)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baked beans, lentils, peas, onions, garlic & fizzy drinks• Fizzy drinks can be better tolerated if left for 5 minutes and stirred.• Eating at irregular times of the day and gulping your food can also result in wind• Try to eat slower, and chew carefully. Avoiding drinking through a straw and chewing gum
Increased smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Onions, garlic, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, beans, fish and eggs• Peppermint oil capsules and yoghurt can help mask the smell
Increased output	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to eat less of these foods to decrease output, but don't cut them out all together: Fried foods, spicy foods, alcohol, drinks that contain caffeine, fibrous foods (such as wholegrain cereals, nuts, pulses, raw fruit & vegetables).• Eating late in the evening may increase nighttime output - try eating earlier• Banana, bread, rice, pasta and foods containing gelatine (such as marshmallows) may help to thicken output

Everyone is different and what upsets one person may be fine for another. Try all foods and only avoid those which repeatedly cause you problems. It's important to remember that your tolerance will change over time, so retry problem foods.

Diarrhoea (loose poo or excessive output)

If you continue to have diarrhoea or if it returns in the future, you will need to increase your intake of salt and fluid.

- Add salt to meals. Try and include salty foods such as soup, hard cheeses, crisps, savoury biscuits, ready meals, sauces, Oxo cubes or Bovril.
- Drink more than 8 cups of fluid every day. Aim to replace the fluid losses from the bag. Rehydration solutions are available from your chemist or on prescription (for example Diarolyte or Glucodrate) if required.
- Spicy foods and alcohol can irritate the lining of the digestive tract and cause diarrhoea. Try to have less of these when symptoms are worse and find your own level of tolerance.
- Drinks that contain caffeine such as cola, coffee and strong tea may also make symptoms worse. Try having weak tea, herbal tea, or hot chocolate.

It's important to remember that food is not always to blame for symptoms. Diarrhoea may be the result of a stomach bug, medication, stress, or emotional upset.

Seek medical advice if diarrhoea continues (output of consistently more than 1 litre) and/or you develop signs of dehydration.

Blockages

Chewing your food thoroughly, adding a sauce or sipping small amounts of a drink whilst eating should help your body to breakdown and digest your food.

Undigested food can temporarily block your ileostomy. If this happens you may feel sick, bloated or be sick (vomit). Your output may slow down or stop.

If your output stops, lie down and rest, drink plenty of water and stop eating. If symptoms persist for more than 6 to 8 hours, consult your bowel care specialist nurse or your GP.

Patient Information

Useful contacts

Bowel Cancer UK	020 7940 1760 www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk
Colostomy Association	Free phone: 0800 3284257 www.colostomyassociation.org.uk
GUTS UK Charity	0207 4860341 https://gutscharity.org.uk/
NHS - Food & Diet	www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood
Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group	Free phone: 0800 0184 724 www.iasupport.org
Macmillan Cancer Support	Free phone 0808 808 0000 www.macmillan.org.uk
Crohn's & Colitis UK	01727830038 https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/

For more information and support contact:

Bowel Care Specialist Nurses	024 7696 5616 024 7696 5617
Coventry Dietitians	024 7696 6161

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Patient Information

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