

## Nutrition and Dietetics

# Nutrition team - dietary advice for people with a high output stoma

**This information is for people with a chronic high output jejunostomy or ileostomy. It is not intended for people with a normal functioning ileostomy or those where a high output is temporary. This advice should only be followed with supervision from the Nutrition team.**

When a large amount of your bowel is surgically removed or is not functioning correctly, a stoma may be formed. A stoma is an opening from the gut to the outside of the body. It allows waste products from the body to be removed. Stomas have different names according to where in the gut they are formed. A jejunostomy is an opening from the jejunum, an ileostomy is an opening from the ileum, which are both parts of the small bowel.

### **A stoma may be formed due to conditions including:**

- Blood clots
- Radiation
- Crohn's disease
- Tumour removal

When part of the bowel has been removed or is not working correctly, your gut cannot properly absorb nutrients, electrolytes (salts), fluid and your body's own secretions. They pass through the bowel quickly and this produces the high output from your stoma.



## Patient Information

If you're losing a lot of fluid from your stoma, it can lead to severe dehydration and electrolyte (salt) disturbance. You may need a strict plan for when and how much you eat, take medication and drink fluids. An oral rehydration drink may replace some of your fluid. Depending on how much available bowel you have for absorption you may require intravenous (parenteral) fluid and nutrition. This is in order to keep you hydrated and to maintain your weight. You'll be given more information about this if it is required.

### **Signs of dehydration include:**

- Dry mouth
- Increased thirst
- Reduction in amount of urine produced
- Urine that is dark in colour and smells strongly
- Tiredness
- Dizziness
- Muscle cramps
- Headache

Urine that is clear and pale yellow in colour indicates a good level of hydration.

## **Fluid allowance**

You could become dehydrated if you have a large amount of liquid coming out of your stoma. Drinking too much regular fluid can make your stoma output increase. This makes you thirstier, so you drink even more, which makes the stoma more active. It's like a cycle. We therefore recommend a specific fluid allowance for the regular fluids you drink. All fluids count towards your fluid allowance, this includes water, juice, squash, tea, coffee, soup, milk and custard.

### **Advice for managing your fluid allowance:**

- Sip drinks slowly throughout the day.
- Carefully suck ice cubes. These are around 25ml each.
- Use a smaller cup or only half-fill your cup each time you take a drink.

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- Chewing gum or sucking boiled sweets can help if your mouth is dry as this will produce saliva.

### Oral rehydration solution

An oral rehydration solution such as Dioralyte or St Marks Solution, may be recommended to help your bowel absorb more fluid and salt. This can help to reduce your stoma output. This fluid **does not** count towards your fluid allowance. It can be strange to drink salty solutions at first, but many people find that if they stick to the recommended amount of rehydration solution their taste buds get used to it within a few days. They'll start to see the benefits of having a reduced stoma output, and by feeling more hydrated.

#### To help make this fluid more manageable, you could try:

- adding a small amount of flavoured squash; however, make sure your overall volume for this drink remains at 1000ml. You can add less water if you are going to add squash
- sip slowly throughout the day
- stir the solution regularly to make sure it has mixed well
- drinking through a straw
- chill the prepared solution or freeze and drink as it thaws. Avoid adding ice cubes as this will dilute the solution

### Food and eating

When you have a high output stoma, it's difficult to get all the nutrients you need from food. That's because the good stuff gets washed out through the stoma before your body can absorb it. Through a combination of medication, strict fluid allowance and choosing the right types of food, you can make sure your body absorbs as many nutrients as possible.

The best diet for a high output stoma is one that is **high in calories, protein and salt with a reduced amount of fibre at first**. This can be difficult if you have previously followed a different type of diet. Discuss this with your dietitian who will offer support and advice during the transition onto your new diet. Depending on your condition and bowel anatomy, you may also need nutritional supplements like Fortisips. Your dietitian will advise you on whether this is appropriate and which products to try.

**Even though other's experience can be helpful, it's important to remember that everyone reacts differently to food, especially before and after surgery. So, it's best to choose foods based on what works for you personally and follow the advice from your dietitian.**

- Try to develop a regular eating pattern; this will make your stoma output more manageable.
- Choose **starchy carbohydrates** such as white bread, chapattis, low fibre cereals like rice krispies and cornflakes, ready brek, potatoes (no skins), green bananas, sweet potato, yam, dishes made with maize, millet or cornmeal and white pasta or rice for energy. These foods may also thicken your stoma output. Make these types of foods the main part of all your meals.
- Include at least 2 portions of **protein** each day like beef, pork, bacon, lamb, liver, kidney, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, peanut butter (smooth), textured vegetable protein, Quorn, tofu, tempeh. Cook these foods with additional fat to boost their calorie content.
- Eat **salty foods** such as cheese, bacon, ham, sausages, smoked fish (kippers), shellfish, canned fish (tuna, sardines, salmon), meat and fish pastes, tinned foods such as spaghetti and ravioli, meat extracts (Oxo, Bovril), yeast extracts (Marmite) salted crisps, savoury or salty biscuits. Salty foods help your body to absorb more fluid from the gut and reduce the stoma output.
- Milk, cheese and yoghurt are good sources of **calcium** which is important for healthy bones. Include 1 pint of milk or the equivalent alternative per day. Use **full fat** dairy products rather than low fat alternatives. 1 cup of milk (1/3 pint or 200ml) contains the same amount of calcium as 1 small carton of yoghurt (150 ml) or 1oz/30g of cheese, so these may be taken as alternatives to milk.
- Plainly cooked foods are often better tolerated than spicy or highly seasoned dishes.
- Add plenty of **salt** whilst cooking and sprinkle salt onto your meals.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine drinks before bedtime like coffee, cola and tea as they may make your stoma more active during the night. See below for further information on alcohol.
- Eat slowly and chew well.

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**Fruit and vegetables** provide fibre and a range of vitamins and minerals that are essential for good health. A portion is equal to, 2-3 tablespoons of vegetables, a small salad, and a piece of fruit like an apple or banana, 2-3 tablespoons of stewed/tinned fruit or a small glass (150ml) of fruit juice. Fibrous foods can be difficult to digest and may cause a blockage if not chewed properly or eaten in a large quantity.

### **For the first 6 to 8 weeks after surgery you should avoid:**

Beans	Mushrooms	Raw vegetables
Celery	Nuts	Salad
Coconut	Peas	Seeds
Dried fruit	Pineapple	Sweetcorn
Fruit skins	Pips	Vegetable skins
Mango	Pith	

When your stoma has settled (after 6 to 8 weeks) you may want to reintroduce fibre. This should be done in small quantities, 1 food at a time, ensuring that the foods are cooked until they are soft and chewed well.

Reintroduction of these foods will be based on individualised advice from the dietitian.

### **Fruits and vegetables that tend to be better tolerated include:**

- 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

Add custard, cream, yoghurt, crème fraiche, sugar or ice-cream to fruits to increase the calorie content.

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**Fats and oils** such as, butter, margarine, cooking oil, mayonnaise, salad dressings, provide calories, essential fats and vitamins. Make sure that you add plenty of fats to your food to increase the calorie content like, spread butter thickly on bread, biscuits or scones or add it on to potatoes or rice; add plenty of oil when cooking.

- The following foods contain **fats or sugars** and are high in calories. It is normally recommended that they are eaten in small quantities for healthy eating. However, as you are not able to absorb nutrients sufficiently, you need to consume these types of foods and drinks in larger portions in order to maximise your calorie intake from food:
  - Pasties, pies, sausage rolls
  - Cakes, biscuits, pastries
  - Puddings, ice cream, cream (all varieties)
  - Chocolate, sweets
  - Crisps
  - Avocados
  - Butter, spreads and oils
  - Cheese
- Excessive amounts of **alcohol** are not good for health. Some types, such as beer may increase your stoma output. Seek the advice of your doctor before drinking alcohol. If you drink alcohol, take it in moderation: 3 or 4 units/day or less for men and 2 or 3 units per day for women, with 2 alcohol-free days per week.
- 1 unit is equal to:
  - ½ pint of beer, lager or cider
  - A single pub measure of spirit (25ml). such as vodka or whisky
  - A small glass of sherry or a small 125ml glass of wine (approx half a pub measure of wine)

## Meal suggestions:

### Breakfast ideas

- Cereal with milk or a smooth yoghurt (no fruit bits) like, corn or rice-based cereals
- Strained porridge such as Ready Brek

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- White toast or bread and seedless jam / marmalade / smooth peanut butter / butter or spread
- Cheese on white toast
- Egg (boiled, scrambled or poached) on white bread or toast
- Bacon on white bread or toast
- Avocado on white bread or toast
- Crumpets or white English muffins

**Main meal ideas** – make sure you base this around a starchy carbohydrate and protein source.

- White pasta or spaghetti with tomato sauce with plain cheese (meat or meat alternative could be used in the sauce)
- Any fish (without bones) in batter or breadcrumbs with chips
- Egg sandwich on white bread / white pitta
- Cheese and ham omelette
- Macaroni cheese
- Mashed potato (without skin) with cheese and well boiled carrots
- Smooth soup with grated cheese and vegetable roll
- Meat or tofu or Quorn as burgers / sausages / plain fillets with mashed potato or chips and well-cooked carrots, broccoli or cauliflower
- Tuna or chicken pasta bake, made using a smooth tomato sauce and cheese

## Snacks

- Plain biscuits such as, rich tea, nice, custard creams, bourbons, shortbread
- Plain scone
- Avocado or egg on white toast
- Crisps
- Sweets or chocolate (without fruit or nuts)
- Rice cakes
- Crackers and cheese

### **Puddings**

- Rice pudding
- Plain sponge (no fruit) and custard
- Plain yoghurt (no fruit bits)
- Tinned or stewed fruit
- Sponge cakes
- Melon (without seeds) with ice cream or plain yoghurt (no fruit bits)

## **Common questions about food and a high output stoma**

### **Can I eat spicy foods?**

Spicy foods like chilli and curry may upset your stoma function. We recommend sticking to mild food for the first 6-8 weeks. After that, if you're comfortable, you can slowly introduce more spicier food based on your own tolerance.

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

At first, your stoma may pass more wind (flatus) than usual, but this soon reduces, especially once you begin to eat a more varied and regular diet. Wind is a normal part of digestion, but it may be increased by swallowing air whilst eating or by eating fibrous foods.

### **You may reduce wind caused by swallowed air by:**

- Eating regular meals in a relaxed environment
- Eating slowly and chewing food carefully
- Avoid fizzy drinks. If you still want to have them, pour them into a glass, stir and let them sit for 10 minutes before drinking.

### **You should also try avoiding:**

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

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- Talking or drinking when eating

Foods and drinks that can increase the wind passed by your stoma include beans, beer, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carbonated drinks, cauliflower, cucumber, eggs, fruit, green vegetables, mushrooms, nuts, onions, peas, spinach, sweet corn, fatty foods (pan-fried or deep-fried foods) and rich creamy foods.

**Many people with high output stomas don't have long term issues with wind problems because food doesn't stay in the gut long enough for bacteria to produce gas through fermentation.**

### **You may reduce wind caused by fibrous foods by:**

- Using low fibre alternatives such as white bread, white rice and pasta, refined cereals such as cornflakes and rice krispies
- Reducing your intake of pulses (like peas, beans, lentils), vegetables (such as, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, sprouts, onions, leeks, asparagus), fruits, especially skins, pith, hard or dried fruit, nuts and seeds
- Peppermint water, peppermint tea or capsules may assist in reducing wind and may alleviate pain associated with wind.

### **I sometimes experience a more liquid output. Which foods may cause this?**

Some foods can make your stoma output more liquid, especially if you eat a lot of them. These include fibrous foods like wholemeal bread, wholegrain cereals, pulses, leafy green vegetables, raw vegetables, sweet corn, fruits and nuts. Spicy foods, alcohol, drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea and cola, fruit juices and fried foods can also have this effect. If you eat a lot of these foods and notice your output is too liquid, you might want to try eating less of them to see if it helps thicken your stoma output.

### **What should I do if my output increases?**

Several factors can cause an increase in stoma output, like a stomach bug, stress, antibiotics, eating spicy foods or missing medications that help slow down your bowel. If this happens, it's important to continue to take fluids as usual. Your doctor or nutrition team may recommend adding salt replacements to your fluids as advised by your doctor or Nutrition Team. If you

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can't have meals, try taking salt in the form of meat extract drinks like Oxo or Bovril and eat dry savoury crackers. If your condition persists for more than 2 days, and your urine looks dark in colour and has a strong smell then seek advice from your nutrition team. They may advise you to increase your anti diarrhoeal medication or ask for a sample of your output for testing. Foods that are reported to help thicken the stoma output include apple sauce, bananas, buttermilk, cheese, marshmallows, jelly babies, (boiled) milk, noodles, smooth creamy peanut butter, rice, tapioca pudding, toast, potatoes and yoghurt. However, if your bowel is particularly short these types of foods are very unlikely to make a difference.

### **I sometimes see food particles in my bag. Is this normal?**

Yes, some food will pass through unaltered, particularly foods such as sweetcorn and some medication. Chew your food well. Coloured drinks such as blackcurrant drinks may make your output purple.

### **What happens if I get constipated?**

Constipation does not occur in the patient with a high output stoma. If your output stops or slows down considerably you may have a blockage and should seek medical attention immediately.

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

Some foods can cause more odour than others. Foods like asparagus, baked beans, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, eggs, fish, garlic, green vegetables, onions, peanut butter, some spices and strong cheeses may cause a problem for some people. You may wish to try avoiding these foods to see if this reduces the issue but try not to over restrict your diet. Adding vinegar to fish dishes can help reduce the traditional fishy odour and also helps to get rid of fish smells when the bag is changed or emptied. Parsley is a natural odour eater. Alternately, you could try ostomy deodorant sprays and drops that can help mask or eliminate odours. Your stoma care nurse can give you advice about these.

### **Will my stoma increase my risk of food poisoning whilst on holiday abroad?**

You are at no greater risk of food poisoning than a person who does not have a stoma. However, you are more at risk of becoming severely dehydrated if

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you do experience food poisoning. You should follow the guidelines on food hygiene for the country you are visiting and it is always advisable to drink bottled water when traveling abroad. If your stoma output increases while on holiday, make sure to stay hydrated and seek advice from your nutrition team or doctor before travelling.

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