



Colostomy

nutrition advice

Keeping you healthy after ostomy surgery





Food freedom

Maintaining a balanced diet is important for living a healthy lifestyle, this does not change once you've had your ostomy surgery. We understand that finding the foods that work for you and your ostomy can be confusing, which is why we have worked with our team of stoma nurses and dietitian, to create this handy nutrition advice booklet which we hope you will find beneficial.

Please be reassured that you can continue to enjoy your favourite foods, however as with everyone, regardless of whether they have a stoma or not, you can react differently to certain foods.

It is important to start small and build up. So start reintroducing your favourite foods one at a time to make sure they do not cause you any upset, and if you are looking for any further advice please contact your stoma nurse or healthcare professional.

In this booklet we will cover:

- How the digestive system works
- The five food groups that make a healthy, balanced diet
- Frequently asked questions (or FAQs) answered by our amazing nurse team



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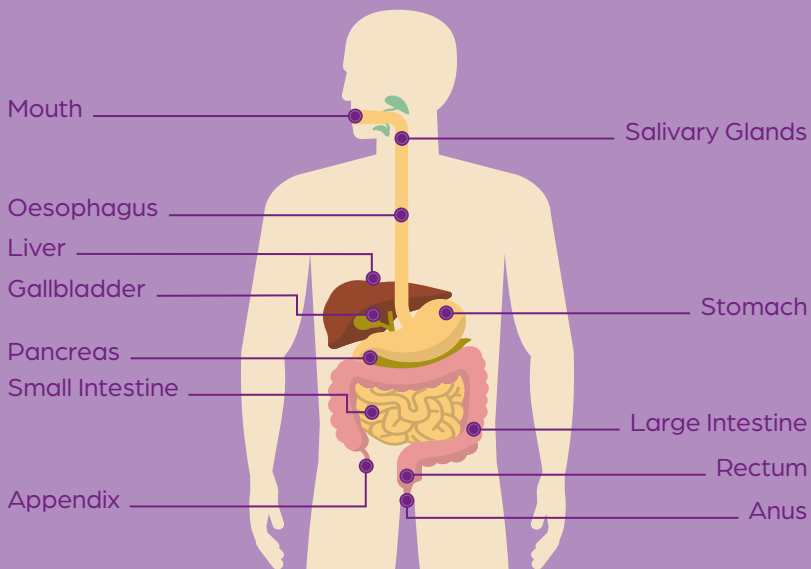
General good advice

How the digestive system works

Digestion begins with the chewing and swallowing of food. It then moves down the oesophagus (or food pipe) into our stomach, where it is mixed with digestive acids that break down food. The contents of the stomach are then released into the small intestine, which is an approximately 22-foot long muscular tube that breaks down food using enzymes released by the pancreas and bile from the liver. It is mainly responsible for the absorption of nutrients into the bloodstream.

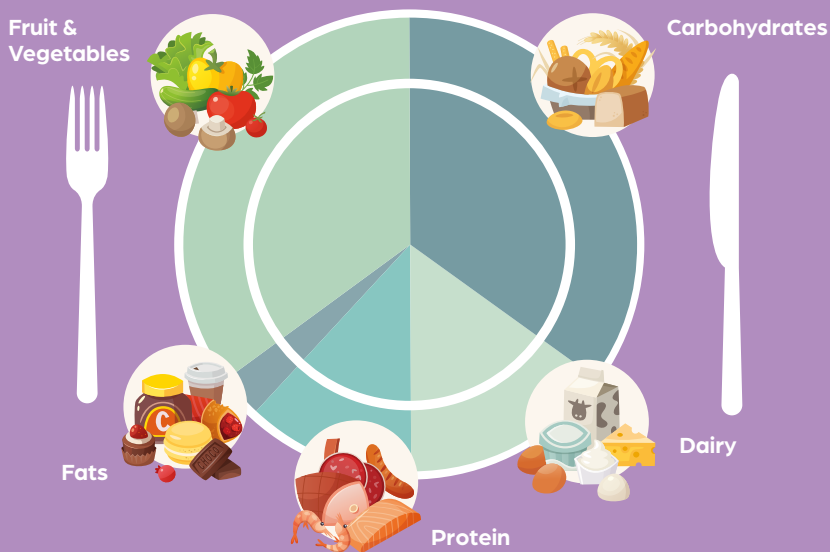
Once the nutrients are absorbed, the food travels through the small intestine into the large intestine (the colon), where water and remaining absorbable nutrients are absorbed. The stool is stored in the colon until it leaves the body via the rectum then anus.

Now that you have a colostomy your stools are passed out of your colon instead of the rectum.



What is a healthy balanced diet?

A healthy balanced diet is made up of the five food groups. The Eat Well Guide below is a recommendation only, for what your meals should look like. You don't need to achieve this balance with every meal, even if you just try to get the balance right once a week to begin with.



Fruit & Vegetables	Carbohydrates	Dairy	Protein	Fats
All fruit and vegetables including: Frozen Fresh Canned Dried Juiced	Bagels Rice Breakfast cereal Pasta Couscous Polenta Wheat Yams	Cheese Yogurt Cream Cheese (This also includes non dairy alternatives to these foods)	Poultry Game White fish Oily fish (Fresh, frozen or canned) Nuts Eggs Beans Vegetarian meal alternatives	Vegetable oil Rapeseed oil Olive oil Sun oil Fats / sugars Cakes Biscuits Chocolates Puddings

Reference: NHS Eat Well Guide – www.nhs.uk/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/

Maintaining a healthy diet FAQs

Healthy eating is important for us all, and you should continue to follow a balanced diet for good health. Everyone's tolerance to different food varies, so monitor your reaction to foods to understand your tolerance.

Why do we need carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates give you energy, which helps with the absorption of calcium and Vitamin B. Wholegrain variants offer lots of fibre to keep the digestive system healthy. Base your meals around starchy carbohydrates. If you're having chips, go for oven chips which are lower in fat and salt.

Why do we need protein?

Protein provides vitamins, minerals and in particular iron, which is essential for healing and repair. It is recommended to eat two to three portions each day. Meat is a good source of iron, and it is recommended to eat at least two portions of fish each week, one of which is oily.

Why do we need dairy?

Dairy contains protein and calcium and some vitamins like vitamin A, B and B12. Dairy is the main source of calcium which is essential for healthy bones. Aim to drink ½ to 1 full pint of milk (or equivalent) each day. Choose lower fat options if required.

Plant based diet

A plant based diet is based on food that comes from plants, with few or no ingredients that come from animals. This includes vegetables, wholegrain, legumes, nuts, seeds, and fruits. If following a plant based diet, it is important to speak with a dietitian to discuss a suitable diet plan.

Why do we need fruit and vegetables?

Fruit and vegetables provide lots of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, which are essential for good health, and contain fibre to keep your digestive system healthy. You should aim for at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. If you find some fruit and vegetables are intolerable at first post-surgery, try puréed vegetables, tinned or peeled fruit.

Why do we need unsaturated fats and oils?

These products are considered to be “beneficial fats” because they can improve cholesterol levels, ease inflammation and stabilize heart rhythms. They provide energy and essential fats, which can be enjoyed in small amounts, choose unsaturated options if possible.



Dietary advice for ostomates



Eat meals regularly

You may need to start with 5–6 small meals post surgery until the stoma has settled, with the aim to return to a regular meal pattern.



Chew your food well

Chewing is the first process in the foods journey, and it is important to take time and chew the food well.



Try new foods one at a time

Learn which foods may give you annoying side effects such as excess gas, a looser stool, or odour. If a new food seems to give you problems, eliminate it for a few weeks, but try it again later. Reintroduce foods slowly so you can determine which ones work for you.



Avoid gaining excess weight

Once you're on the road to recovery, you should avoid gaining excess weight. Extra weight is not good for your ostomy, and it can cause health problems in general.



Drink a lot of fluid daily

You may lose more body fluids than usual through the stoma, so it is important to drink plenty of fluids and aim for 6–8 glasses (2 litres) everyday.



No two people will react to the same foods

You will learn through experience which foods, if any, you should avoid. It may be helpful to keep a food and symptoms diary, so you can track how certain foods make you feel.

This is Chris... He's Family.

Chris had his stoma 5 years ago. He is married to Rachel and has 2 children and 4 cats. He loves pickled onion monster munch and reviews beers from all around the world.

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Post surgery advice

A general guideline

Each patient and type of surgery are different, and no standard recommendations can be given for everyone. Most return to maintain a balanced diet, providing all the vitamins, minerals and calories needed for good health.

The way your bowel works after surgery will change. You may have more bowel movement than usual especially in the early days, or experience more wind than usual. It could take a few weeks or months for the changes to settle, eating foods at a regular time each day will help encourage a regular pattern for your bowel function. If you are experiencing some issues or would like further advice, please speak to your stoma nurse or healthcare professional. Here are a some general guidelines to help you:

- To help your body heal after surgery, include high protein foods such as fish, meats and eggs to your diet.
- Substitute fresh fruit and vegetables with frozen and tinned if you find them difficult to take.
- Eating a wide range of food types is required for a healthy, balanced diet. Some may cause you problems, we recommend keeping a daily diary of what you eat and how it affects you.
- Try eating small frequent meals throughout the day. You can eat them from a side plate to help with portion control if needed.
- Try to avoid long periods without eating.
- If you live alone try batch cooking meals, this will help keep you rested whilst recovering from surgery.
- You can start to gradually reintroduce foods that previously caused you problems.

- If you have a newly formed colostomy and are craving nuts, try smooth peanut butter as an alternative.
- If you have a high output stoma or are dehydrated you may need to replace your potassium and sodium. You can do this by eating salted crisps, bananas, or drink either St Mark's Solution or Dioralyte sachets (depending on severity) if your are dehydrated.



Post surgery advice

The effects of food

Listed below are some of the general guidelines of the effects of food after ostomy surgery, which are worthwhile to take note. Use trial and error to determine individual tolerance. Do not be afraid to try the foods you like, just try them in small amounts.

Please note, this is a guide and all stomas behave differently.

Odour production

If your stoma bag is correctly applied, you should not experience any smells. However, some foods may increase the smell from your output, if they effect you just avoid them. Some foods that produce odour are:

Asparagus	Cod liver oil	Onions
Baked beans	Eggs	Peanut butter
Broccoli	Fish	Some vitamins
Cabbage	Garlic	Strong cheese

Increased stools

Alcoholic drinks	Fresh fruits	Raisins
Whole grains	Leafy greens	Raw vegetables
Bran cereals	Milk	Spices
Cooked cabbage	Prunes	

Wind/gas producing

Some foods may cause wind through your stoma, these may be similar to foods that caused wind before you had your colostomy. Avoid these foods for the first 1–2 weeks following your surgery, then only include them in small quantities, or avoid them completely if they continue to cause problems:

Alcoholic drinks	Cauliflower	Nuts
Beans	Cucumbers	Onions
Soy	Dairy products	Radishes
Cabbage	Chewing gum	
Carbonated drinks	Milk	

Please note, this is a guide and all stomas behave differently.

Colour changes

Asparagus	Iron tablets	Tomato sauces
Beets	Red jelly	
Food colouring	Strawberries	

Odour control – foods that can help reduce odour

Buttermilk	Orange juice	Tomato juice
Cranberry juice	Parsley	Yogurt

Stoma blockage

While it is very rare, your colostomy may become blocked. The best way to avoid this is to chew your food well. Take time to eat your food slowly and drink plenty of fluid after you have eaten. Be aware of high risk foods as stated below:

Apple peels	Coconuts	Pineapple
Raw cabbage	Dried fruit	Popcorn
Celery	Mushrooms	Seeds
Chinese vegetables	Oranges	
Whole kernel corn	Nuts	

Constipation relief

Any hot or warm drinks	Cooked veg	Fruit juices
Cooked fruits	Fresh fruits	Water

Diarrhoea control – foods that can help reduce diarrhoea

Apple sauce	Pectic supplement (fibre)	Toast
Bananas	Tapioca	Marshmallows
Boiled rice		

Common concerns with a colostomy

Odour

As mentioned on page 12, with a secure fitting stoma bag there should be no odour except during a bag change. Please see the table on page 13 for list of foods that can help with odour control.

Wind

If you enjoy fizzy drinks and find wind to be a problem, try pouring the drink and letting it stand in a glass. This will help to reduce some of the bubbles before drinking.

Windy foods – for example, cabbage, cauliflower, sprouts, beans, peas, onions and beer may produce more wind.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea or looser stools may be caused by Sorbitol which has a laxative effect on the bowel. Sorbitol is found in fresh fruits, cherries, plums, prunes and peaches.

Sorbitol is also found in sweets, mints, sweetener, spiced foods, alcohol, and chewing gum. It is also used to sweeten sugar free products. Limit intake of these foods if diarrhoea is a problem.

Head to page 19 for more information.

Undigested foods

If some foods pass into your stoma bag undigested, and do not cause any problems, this does not mean you need to avoid them, for example sweetcorn.



Colour

Some undigested foods may cause the colour of your output to alter. Please do not worry, you do not necessarily need to avoid these foods.

Red foods such as beetroot and tomato juice may affect your stoma output and turn it red and some medications such as iron may cause your stoma output to turn black. Seek advice from your stoma nurse if you are concerned.

Alcohol

Alcohol guidelines from UK Chief Medical Officer for men and women is not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.

Gassy drinks i.e. beer can cause wind, especially on an empty stomach. Alcohol may also increase the volume and consistency of your output.

Additional Information: Please discuss any dietary concerns, lack of weight gain etc. with your stoma nurse. You may need to be referred for a dietary assessment.

Colostomy FAQs

You may have some questions about changing your diet post ostomy surgery, please be reassured you are not alone and your stoma nurse or healthcare professional will be able to give you further support and advice.

Colostomy patients may find that foods which caused problems before surgery, continue to do so after. Here are some tips to help you...

To reduce flatus:

1. Drink probiotic drinks daily at breakfast
2. Eat crystallised ginger
3. Drink peppermint cordial in hot water

To prevent constipation

1. Drink 6–8 glasses of fluid a day
2. Have Weetabix/bran cereal for breakfast
3. Include a selection of fruit and vegetables a day

Increased stool or diarrhoea

If your stoma is producing loose output, your body will be losing more water and salt. This increases your risk of dehydration. It is important to ensure you are drinking plenty of fluids and also adding salt to your meals to replace any lost salt.

What is colostomy diarrhoea?

Colostomy diarrhoea is the frequent passage of watery waste from your colostomy.

Sometimes but not always accompanied by tummy ache or cramps.

What can cause colostomy diarrhoea?

- Food poisoning
- A tummy bug
- Radiotherapy to the bowel
- Chemotherapy
- Emotional upsets; stress, anxiety, shock
- Diet

Hints and tips

- Do not stop taking any prescribed medication without first discussing it with your doctor.
- If symptoms persist, your doctor may require you to provide a stool specimen. They may also prescribe anti-diarrhoea medication and rehydration solution.
- Try to find ways of managing stress and anxiety. Take a look at our mental health advice booklet for some general guidance and there are lots of resources available to you online.
- Keep a food diary to identify and eliminate foods that may not agree with you.
- You may find a drainable bag more convenient until the bout of diarrhoea has ceased.

What if you get constipated

Constipation can affect us all. A colostomy may not work every day but should produce an output most days. If you have not had an output from your colostomy for 3 days and/or you feel unwell, contact your GP or stoma nurse.

What can cause colostomy constipation

- Medication, particularly pain relief containing morphine or codeine, antidepressants, iron supplements, calcium supplements, indigestion remedies and water tablets are amongst the most common culprits.
- Inadequate amounts of natural soluble fibre in your diet.
- Change of routine, fluid intake or eating pattern.
- Anxiety or stress.
- Lack of exercise.

What can help alleviate constipation symptoms

- Drink more fluid.
- Increase your fibre by including more wholemeal, fruit and vegetables. Please refer to page 13 for list of foods that can relieve constipation symptoms.
- Try to be more active if you can.

Did you know...



60–70%

of the human body consists of water, **keeping hydrated is essential.**

Watermelon, strawberries and grapefruit each have a water content of over

90%

perfect for keeping hydrated.



Drink 8
glasses of water a day,
a lack of fluid causes dehydration.

Hydration tip

Make your own vitamin water, simply add slices of cucumber, lemon, lime or berries to a jug of cold water.

Signs of dehydration

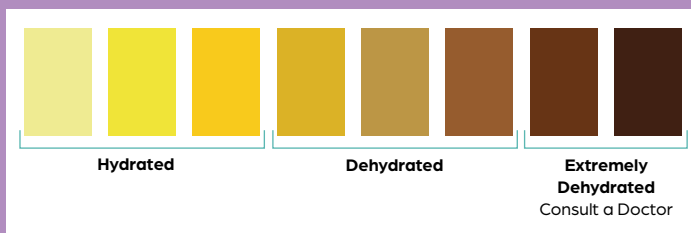
Water makes up two thirds of our body, and it is vital we drink enough fluid to maintain a healthy balance. Many people get dehydrated by not drinking enough fluid or by losing fluids and not replacing them. Good hydration is important for all age groups and is something everyone needs to consider.

What are the signs of dehydration?

The signs of dehydration are visible in your urine. Dark and strong smelling urine is a clear sign that you need to drink more fluids.

A colour chart to check for signs of dehydration can be used to help identify levels of dehydration. Other symptoms include:

- Pain when urinating (UTI)
- Dry mouth/lips
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Lack of concentration



Please see the hydration colour chart which can be used to help you check for signs of dehydration.

If dehydration is left untreated it can become severe. Severe dehydration is a medical emergency and requires medical attention. The key is to drink regularly throughout the day, if you are active or if the weather is particularly hot there is greater risk of dehydration.

As always, if you require any further advice or are concerned about any of the topics we discuss in the booklet, please consult your healthcare professional or stoma nurse.



**We hope you have found this booklet
useful in helping to understand nutrition
post ostomy surgery.**

It is important to remember that you can enjoy food
as before your surgery, just take your time reintroducing
foods back into your diet, whilst maintaining a
balanced diet.

Please be mindful that this is a recommended guide only.
If you have any queries please contact your stoma
nurse or healthcare professional, who will be able to
assist you further.

Thank you

Nutrition and Hydration Week



An annual event with a shared objective to highlight, celebrate and promote improvements in the provision of nutrition and hydration, locally, nationally and globally.

To find out further
information visit our website:
www.nutritionandhydrationweek.co.uk

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