



# Ileostomy

## 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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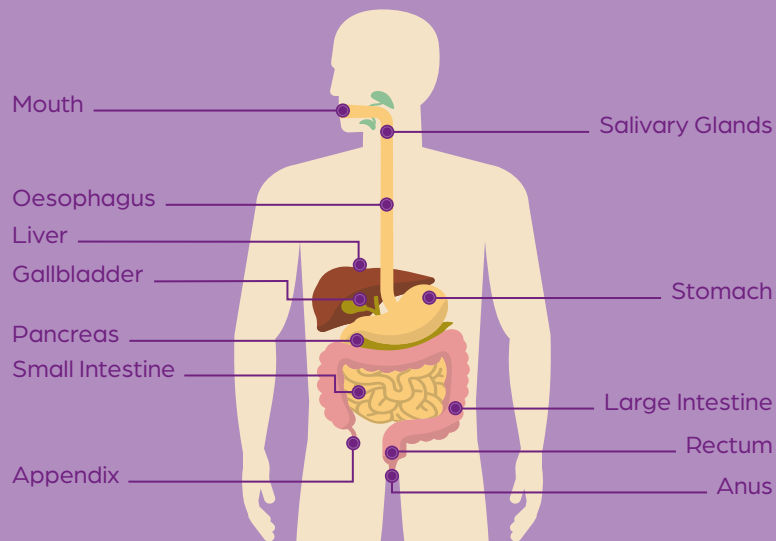
## General good advice

### 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.

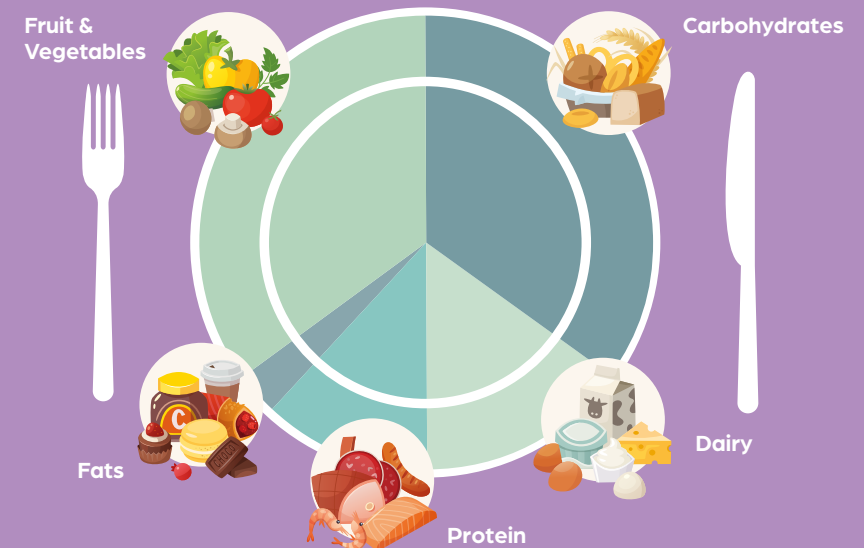
Once the nutrients are absorbed, the food travels through the small intestine into the large intestine (the colon), where water and remaining absorbable nutrients are absorbed. The stool is stored in the colon until it leaves the body via the rectum then anus.

Now you have an ileostomy, your body absorbs nutrients differently. After the nutrients from your food have been absorbed in the small bowel the waste product and wind are passed out 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.



## 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/](http://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 would be 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, choosing 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 a lot of fluid. Ileostomy patients who have lost a large part or all of their intestine will especially notice more loss. Aim for 6–8 glasses (1.5–2 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.

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# This is Keith... He's Family.

**Keith** has been an ostomate for 10 years. He loves the new Pelican ModaVi bag, he is a bus driver for First Cymru Buses and loves to bake in his spare time.

"Everything is on time, everything is in perfect condition, I am one happy ostomate."

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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.

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 stoma function. If you are experiencing some issues or would like further advice, please speak to your stoma nurse or healthcare professional. Here are some general guidelines to help you:

- Make sure to maintain your fluid intake. Try to drink around 2 litres of fluid a day. You could try flavoured still water for some variety.
- 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 ileostomy and are craving nuts, try smooth peanut butter as an alternative. You may find they no longer affect your bowel.
- If you have a high output stoma 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 you are dehydrated.

Please refer to page 18 for more information.



## Post surgery advice

### The effects of food

Listed below are some of the general guidelines of the effects of food after ileostomy 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.*

#### Stoma blockage

Your ileostomy may occasionally become blocked with undigested food, some people experience this in the first 6–8 weeks following stoma formation. The best way to avoid blockages is to chew your food well, take time to eat slowly and drink plenty of fluid after you have eaten. Keeping a diary of foods you eat and symptoms you experience can help identify any foods that cause you problems so you can avoid them if needed. Below are a list of foods which are known to increase chances of a blockage. You may wish to consider your personal tolerance to them and avoid them your diet:

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

#### 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 and smell are listed below.

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	

#### Gas producing

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

#### Colour changes

Asparagus	Iron tablets	Tomato sauces
Beets	Red jelly	
Food colouring	Strawberries	

#### Odour control – foods that can help reduce odours and smells

Buttermilk	Parsley	
Cranberry juice	Yogurt	

#### 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		

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

## Common concerns with an ileostomy

Now that you have an ileostomy, your large bowel will either have been removed or will be unused. The role of the large bowel is to primarily reabsorb water and salts from the stools. Your body can no longer do this as your stools leave the body before this can happen, therefore your stools will now be looser.

It may take some time for your stoma to function and there may be a high fluid output at first. Gradually your bowel should adapt and your fluid loss should reduce. If your fluid output is above 1000mls please contact your stoma care nurse for further advice.

Here are some common concerns and advice with an ileostomy:

### Odour

As mentioned on page 12, with a secure fitting bag, there should be no odour except for when changing a pouch. Some people do find that certain foods can cause an odour, such as fish, eggs, onions, green vegetables, cheese, and baked beans.

Find out what suits you, and then decide whether to avoid a particular food that seems to produce an odour.

Peppermint oil capsules or natural yogurt may be useful in masking odour. Parsley and cumin used in cooking often helps with odour and digestion.

### 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.



### Undigested foods

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

### Colour

Some 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.



### Advice on medicines

Contact your GP as they may recommend an alternative prescription.

### Increased ileostomy output

Please contact your stoma nurse for advice.

Some general advice is to:

- Replace lost fluids
- Try drinking isotonic drinks, such as sport drinks, to help replace essential salts and sugars
- Eating clear soups and drinking a Bovril drink can assist in replacing salt loss
- Drink rehydration solutions, such as Dioralyte (which can be obtained from the chemist), to replace fluid and electrolyte losses

You can make your own rehydration solution at home, but please speak to your stoma care nurse or dietician beforehand to ensure this is right for you, and for their recommendation.

Loperamide is used in treating diarrhoea and should be taken 30 minutes before meals. Please discuss any concerns with your stoma care nurse or healthcare professional.

### High output ileostomy/ileostomy diarrhoea

High output is typically categorised as having output above 1 litre. Symptoms of ileostomy high output are:

- Thirst
- Dry mouth
- Loss or no appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- General fatigue
- Headaches

High output can cause dehydration. If you are experiencing high output please contact your stoma care nurse or hospital. Commence rehydration recipe as listed on the opposite page.

On weekends, bank holidays and during out of hours, please seek advice from NHS 111 service, or from your local Accident and Emergency Department if an emergency.



## Ileostomy FAQs

Ileostomy patients may find that certain foods can cause a blockage or obstruction. Here are some tips to help you, please refer to your stoma nurse for further information and support:

### What causes a blockage or obstruction?

- A lump of undigested food that blocks an ileostomy. This type of a blockage is normally relieved by the sudden and often explosive passage of that lump of food.
- Adhesions. There are internal bands of scar tissue that can sometimes cause internal organs to stick together. Adhesions can kink, twist, or pull the bowel causing an obstruction.

### Signs and symptoms of a blockage or obstruction

- Bloating and/or swollen tummy
- Abdominal pain and/or cramp
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Signs of dehydration
- No waste from your stoma
- Watery output from your stoma
- Swollen stoma

### What to do if you develop signs of blockage or obstruction?

- Stop eating solid food
- Increase your intake of fluids. Drink flat cola or sports drinks as well as water
- If your stoma is swollen, remove your bag and replace it with one with a larger opening
- Massage your tummy and try to relax

- Soak in a warm bath. This will relax your abdominal muscles and may relieve the blockage by allowing the passage of an undigested lump of food
- Do not take a laxative
- Do not insert anything into your stoma unless instructed to do so and under the supervision of a healthcare professional
- Do not eat or drink if you are vomiting, not passing anything from your stoma or both of these

It is important to speak to your doctor or stoma nurse if your symptoms persist OR if you have symptoms of dehydration such as dry mouth, headache, dark concentrated urine or a decrease in the amount of urine passed. Hospital admission may be required.

Please see page 12 for the types of foods that can cause a stoma blockage.

## Did you know...



**60–70%**

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

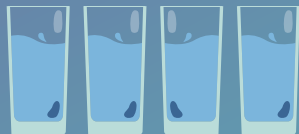
Watermelon, strawberries and grapefruit each have a water content of over

**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.

\*Please remove pips/seeds from fruit where possible before ingesting

## Signs of dehydration

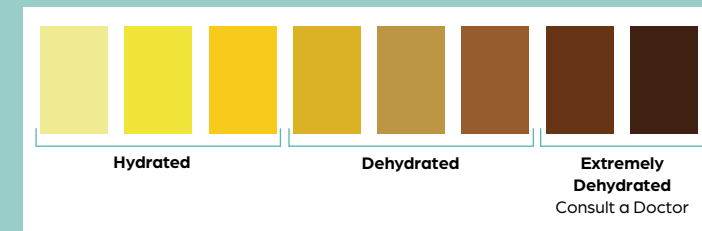
Water makes up two thirds of our body, and it is vital we drink enough fluid to maintain a healthy balance. Many people get dehydrated by not drinking enough fluid or by losing fluids and not replacing them. Good hydration is important for all age groups and is something everyone need to consider.

### 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 sign 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 care 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**

**#BeThe  
Change**



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