

Ileostomy Dietary Guidelines



General Information

Once you have recovered from surgery, you should be able to go back to your usual diet unless you are otherwise instructed. A well-balanced diet is important to good health. You should eat slowly and chew your food well. Add foods to your diet gradually to see how they agree with your system.

Dehydration

If you have high volumes of output (diarrhea) from your ileostomy and/or vomiting, dehydration can occur. Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Thirst
- Dark urine or decreased urinary output
- Weakness, lethargy, or feeling faint
- Dry mouth
- Muscle and/or abdominal cramps

You will probably need to drink more fluids than most people — especially when you are active and perspiring. A good rule of thumb to remember is to drink a glass of liquid whenever you empty your pouch. Always check with your healthcare professional for any dietary or fluid restrictions.

Diarrhea

How thick or thin your output is depends on what you eat and how your body processes the food. If your output changes to mostly fluid and there is a marked increase in the volume, you may have diarrhea. This could be related to food, medications, or an intestinal flu. During this time, you need to drink more fluids to prevent dehydration, avoid foods and beverages that may cause loose output, and empty your pouch more frequently.



Food Blockage

Cramping and abdominal pain along with watery diarrhea or no output may indicate a food blockage or bowel obstruction. This can occur when high fiber foods have difficulty passing through the intestine and exiting the stoma. Food blockage risk can be minimized by reducing high fiber foods, chewing foods thoroughly, and drinking fluids. Your surgeon or nutritionist may advise you to eat only cooked (vs. raw) fruits and vegetables for about six to eight weeks after surgery. This gives your body time to adjust to the changes in digestion. Note: If you have no output and have vomiting, it is important that you see your healthcare professional or seek care at an emergency room as soon as possible.

Gas

As your bowel begins to function after surgery, it is normal to notice gas in your pouch. Gas can be the result of the normal digestion of foods and fluids you consume and swallowed air. Smoking, chewing gum, and chewing with your mouth open can all increase the amount of air you swallow. If you are concerned about gas in your pouch, you may want to consider a pouch with an integrated filter.

Odor

Odor is a concern for most people who have ostomy surgery. Some foods, medications, and nutritional supplements affect the odor of your output. Most pouches are made with odor-barrier film. There are pouch deodorants and lubricating deodorants that can help neutralize the odor when you empty your pouch. If you notice odor at any other time, check the pouch seal for leakage.

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Medications

Some medications or nutritional supplements may change the color, odor, or consistency of your output. Even non-prescription medications, like antacids, can cause changes. Some medications such as long-acting, time-released, or enteric-coated pills may not be absorbed effectively. Do not crush medications without the approval of a pharmacist and never take a laxative. Before adding or discontinuing any medications, it is a good idea to ask your healthcare professional or pharmacist.

Foods and fluids which may help replace lost electrolytes	Bananas, broth (like chicken or beef), potatoes, tomato juice
Foods that may help to thicken loose output	Applesauce, bananas, boiled rice, creamy peanut butter, tapioca, toast
Foods that can contribute to food blockage	Celery, corn, coconut, dried fruit, popcorn, chinese vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, seeds, apple peels and raw cabbage
Foods and fluids which increase intestinal gas	Alcoholic beverages, beans, cabbage, carbonated beverages, cauliflower, chewing gum, cucumbers, onions
Foods which may increase output odor	Asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, eggs, fish, garlic, onions, some spices, strong cheese



Other recommendations from my healthcare professional:

Routine follow-up with your healthcare professional is recommended.

Prior to use, be sure to read the Instructions for Use for information regarding Intended Use, Contraindications, Warnings, Precautions, and Instructions.

Reference: J.E. Carmel, J.C. Colwell, M.T. Goldberg (Eds.), WOCN Society Core Curriculum Ostomy Management (pp.195-206). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer. 2022.

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Hollister Incorporated
2000 Hollister Drive
Libertyville, Illinois 60048
1.800.323.4060

www.hollister.com