

A Low Fibre Diet

You may have been asked to follow a 'low fibre' or 'low residue' diet by your Dietitian, or another medical professional involved in your care. These terms are often used interchangeably but for the purpose of this diet sheet we will use the term 'low fibre'.

Fibre is part of many foods in our diet and is typically found in whole foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrains (such as brown rice, barley, oats) and nuts, beans and pulses. Whole foods are recommended as part of a balanced diet, but for some people, side effects such as diarrhoea, abdominal pain, bloating, vomiting, or bowel obstruction, may occur when these foods are eaten.

Why does fibre upset my bowels?

Dietary fibre is the tough part of food that stays whole as it moves through your small intestine, for example, fruit peel, vegetable skin, pips, seeds and vegetables such as sweetcorn or peas. Once fibre reaches your large intestine, it is completely or partially broken down by bacteria and this can produce water and gas. Everyone has a different amount of fibre that their bowels can tolerate and this leaflet will provide more advice on the best diet to help you to manage your symptoms.

A low fibre diet may be recommended if:

- You are experiencing persistent diarrhoea, abdominal pain, bloating or vomiting
- During a flare-up of Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis
- You have Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- You have a bowel obstruction, or are at risk of developing a bowel obstruction
- You have intestinal strictures – if your strictures are severe or multilevel you may be advised to follow a liquid diet, your dietitian will advise further on this
- Before and/or after bowel surgery
- After the insertion of a colonic stent

Limiting whole foods long-term can lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies; therefore this leaflet will include advice on eating a balanced diet that is low fibre.

There are different types of fibre:

- Insoluble fibre: the body can't digest this. Examples include wholegrain bread and breakfast cereals, brown rice, and wholewheat pasta.
- Soluble fibre: this type of fibre can be partly digested. Examples include oats, barley, rye, bananas, and root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes.

How can I reduce the fibre in my food and still have a balanced diet?

- Peel the skin off your potatoes and vegetables, but eat the soft inside part
- Remove stalks from broccoli and cauliflower, but eat the florets
- Remove any pips, seeds or stringy parts from the fruit
- Avoid raw salads and vegetables
- Choose easy to mash vegetables, such as carrots, parsnips and swede
- Choose a smooth nut butter, such as peanut butter or almond butter, and avoid whole nuts
- Blend your vegetables to make a soup
- Have 150ml of smooth fruit juice with one meal a day
- Cook vegetables well or stew fruit to break down the fibre
- Avoid tough, fibrous or gristly meat, such as steak. Chicken, turkey, boneless fish, stewed meat or mince would be good alternatives
- Chew food well and take your time eating
- Consider taking a daily multivitamin. Ask your Dietitian or medical team for more information

By making these changes, you will reduce the amount of stool passing through the bowel. This should help to reduce bloating and abdominal discomfort.

Here are some further examples of foods to include in your diet, and foods to avoid:

	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Fruit	Canned fruit without seeds: Mandarins, peaches, pears and grapefruit Smooth fruit juices or smoothies (no seeds) Stewed or peeled fruit with pips and skin removed: Apples, pears, plums Ripe bananas, ripe peeled pears	Dried fruits: Prunes, berries, raisins, figs Fruit with seeds: Blackberries, kiwi, raspberries, strawberries Fruit with tough skin or stringy parts: Cherries, blueberries, rhubarb, pineapple, cranberries, grapes, apricots, oranges Unripe fruit e.g. green bananas Coconut
Vegetable	Well cooked, peeled vegetables: Parsnips, swede, carrots, sweet potatoes, cauliflower (stalk	Raw or undercooked vegetables including carrots, celery

Information for Patients

	<p>removed), broccoli (stalk removed), peeled courgette, butternut squash</p> <p>Potatoes without skins</p> <p>Vegetable juice without pulp</p> <p>Blended soup, tomato sauce, passata sauce, tomato puree</p> <p>Well-cooked red split lentils</p>	<p>Salads including lettuce, cucumber, onion, pickles, tomato and coleslaw</p> <p>Vegetables with skins: Sweetcorn, peas, beans/bean sprouts, brussel sprouts, cabbage, mushrooms, okra, peppers, radish, and spinach</p> <p>Chinese vegetables: Bok choy, bamboo shoots</p> <p>Vegetable juice with pulp</p> <p>Pulses: Baked beans, chickpeas, lentils</p>
Milk and dairy products	<p>Most of these foods are ok – except for foods to avoid</p>	<p>Cottage cheese containing vegetable pieces</p> <p>Yoghurts with fruit/berries/muesli</p> <p>Cheese with seeds, nuts, or fruit</p> <p>Ice cream containing nuts</p> <p>High fat foods containing lots of cream or cheese may not be tolerated</p>
Food type	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Cereals	<p>Plain rice, corn-based cereals: Cornflakes, rice krispies, instant oats, coco pops</p>	<p>Wholegrain cereals: Bran or wheat based cereals</p> <p>You may not tolerate porridge but may find that similar finely milled/instant oat cereals are ok</p> <p>Any cereal containing fruit or nuts e.g. muesli</p>
Meat, fish and Alternatives	<p>Animal products don't have fibre, however tough meat may not be digested as well. Ensure these are lean, tender and soft</p> <p>Beef, lamb, chicken, fish (no bones), pork, eggs, tofu</p>	<p>Tough meats with gristle and smoked or cured deli meats</p> <p>Fish bones</p> <p>Very fatty/oily meats may not be well tolerated so monitor tolerance</p>
Bread, flour, pasta rice	<p>White bread, rolls, pittas, chapattis, naan bread (made with white flour)</p> <p>White rice, white pasta</p> <p>Cornflour, sago, tapioca and semolina</p>	<p>Brown, wholemeal and granary bread, rolls, rye bread, pitta, chapattis & naan bread (made with brown or wholemeal flour)</p> <p>Brown rice, brown pasta</p> <p>Any bread or flour products containing seeds, nuts, dried fruit</p>

Information for Patients

	<p>Couscous, polenta, tortillas & tacos</p> <p>Any baked goods made from refined flours (white flour) and allowed ingredients: bagels, biscuits, plain scones, crumpets, bread, buns, crackers, croissants, muffins, pancakes, waffles</p>	<p>e.g., fruit scones, currant/fruit loaves</p> <p>Pearl barley, quinoa</p> <p>Bread with added seeds, fruit or nuts</p>
Miscellaneous	<p>Seedless, rindless varieties of jam and marmalade</p> <p>Bovril, Marmite & chocolate spread. Sugar, honey & syrup</p> <p>Ketchup, bottled sauces, vinegar, margarine, butter, oils, mayonnaise, sour cream, smooth sauces, salad dressing, soy sauce</p> <p>Crisps, plain crackers, pretzels, gelatine</p>	<p>Jams with seeds or peel (marmalade, strawberry, raspberry, blueberry etc.)</p> <p>Chutneys, pickles, relish, sauerkraut, and horseradish</p> <p>Popcorn. Savoury snacks containing nuts e.g. Bombay mix, trail mix</p> <p>Wholemeal or seeded crackers</p>
Food type	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Nuts	Small amount of smooth nut butter if tolerated	Avoid all whole nuts or nut pieces
Drinks	<p>Hot chocolate, Ovaltine and Horlicks</p> <p>Flavoured water and squash</p> <p>Milkshakes</p>	<p>Prune juice/Juice with pulp or seeds</p> <p>Caffeine may irritate the bowel – if so, it may be of benefit to try decaf tea and coffee</p>
Desserts	<p>Biscuits and cakes made with white flour</p> <p>Rich tea, shortbread and sponge cake</p> <p>Plain puddings, custard, jelly, semolina, rice pudding</p> <p>Ice cream and ice pops</p> <p>Boiled sweets</p> <p>Chocolate/toffee/fudge (without fruit/nuts)</p>	<p>Biscuits or cakes made with brown or wholemeal flour - digestives, flapjacks, oatcakes, cereal bars</p> <p>Desserts, puddings, biscuits/cookies or pies containing dried fruit, coconut, fruit peel or nuts e.g. mince pies, fruit crumble etc.</p> <p>Chocolate/toffee/fudge with dried fruit, coconut, or nuts</p>

Diabetes management on a low fibre diet

If you have Diabetes you may find it more difficult to manage your blood glucose levels. High fibre foods slow down the absorption of carbohydrate, so following a low fibre diet may cause your blood glucose levels to become elevated.

Information for Patients

It is important to include low fibre carbohydrate foods with each meal, keeping your carbohydrate portion sizes consistent. This will help to minimise the risk of low blood glucose levels (Hypoglycaemia or 'hypo') if your current Diabetes medication can increase the risk of Hypos.

Low fibre carbohydrate foods include a peeled potato, white rice, white pasta or white bread. Including a source of protein with a meal may help raise the blood glucose levels more slowly. Sources of protein include: meat and poultry (such as beef, pork, ham, chicken or turkey), fish, eggs, milk, dairy products and milky puddings (such as yogurts, custard and rice pudding). Vegetarian sources of protein include soya, tofu, and seitan.

If you have ongoing concerns about your blood glucose levels, we recommend you contact your Diabetes Specialist nurse for advice and explain that you have been advised to follow a low fibre diet.

Fluid

It is important that you have an adequate fluid intake while following a low fibre diet. You should aim to have at least 8 to 10 cups of fluid daily.

Constipation

Some people may get constipated whilst following a low fibre diet, drinking plenty of fluids throughout the day will help. Your GP can advise appropriate medication if needed, such as a laxative. You may find that as dietary fibre is increased you can reduce or even stop these medications.

What do I do if I have a poor appetite or have lost weight?

Whilst following a new diet, it is recommended that you weigh yourself once a week and document your weight. Weekly weight fluctuations are normal, but if you notice ongoing weight loss for several weeks, you should contact your dietitian, medical professional or GP for additional advice.

Low Fibre Meal ideas

Breakfast

- Fruit juice (without bits)
- Bowl of cereal (choose low fibre varieties e.g. Corn or rice cereals (e.g. toasted rice, rice pops) or instant oats
- White bread with margarine or butter
- Shred-less marmalade or jam
- Poached/boiled/scrambled eggs with white toast
- Waffles, French toast, or pancake

Snack Ideas

- Plain biscuit e.g. Rich Tea, Marie, ginger, shortbread, custard creams
- Smooth yogurt/ fromage frais/ mousse/ blancmange or any other individual pot dessert (avoid those with fruit or nuts)
- Plain scone or plain biscuit
- One portion of fruit (from low fibre list)
- Cheese or mackerel on white toast
- Cheese and plain white crackers
- Savoury snacks such as crisps e.g. corn puffs or potato crisps

Information for Patients

- Rice cakes with smooth peanut butter

Lunch

- Sandwiches made with white varieties of breads such as pitta, naan or seedless bagels. Croissants, toasted crumpets, pancakes, crispbread, muffins or scones – made from white flour (avoid those with fruit or nuts)
- Sandwich fillings e.g. tuna, egg mayonnaise, cheese or ham
- White pasta/rice/bread/potato without skin
- Strained soup

Evening Meal

- Meat, fish, chicken, eggs, or vegetarian/vegan options, such as tofu, seitan protein, soya
- One to two portions of low fibre vegetables
- Potatoes or pasta or white rice /bread

Dessert

- Milky puddings, jelly, ice cream, milkshake
- Sponge cakes without fruit or nuts e.g. Madeira, iced or chocolate sponge
- Boiled sweets, chocolate (avoid those with fruit or nuts)

Re-introducing fibre into your diet

A low fibre diet is usually a temporary measure for symptom control, but in some cases people are advised to follow a low fibre diet longer term. Your Dietitian or medical professional will be able to advise you on how long you need to follow a low fibre diet for.

Re-introducing fibre back into your diet will help to lower your risk of developing heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer. Fibre is important for healthy gut bacteria, and this can enhance immunity and reduce inflammation in the gut. Fibre is also known to improve constipation and lactose intolerance.

When the time comes to re-introduce fibre, we recommend that you start with one new fibrous food at a time, in order to monitor your tolerance and symptoms. Start with a small amount of fruit, then a vegetable or cereal and gradually re-add a new fibrous food every one to three days. Over time, you may notice that your tolerance to fibre improves and your gastrointestinal symptoms settle as your body adjusts. Remember to chew food well and to ensure that you are drinking plenty of water when reintroducing fibre back into your diet.

If you do need to follow a low fibre diet long-term, you can request to see a dietitian to ensure that your diet has adequate nutritional variety. A Dietitian can aid you with re-introducing fibre and help to identify the cause of your ongoing symptoms. We would recommend that you purchase a multivitamin from your local supermarket or pharmacy. An A-Z multivitamin once a day with food would be sufficient.

Contact details

Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Telephone: **0121 371 3485**

- Heartlands Hospital, Good hope Hospital or Solihull Hospital

Telephone: **0121 424 2673**

Information for Patients

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.