



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



Oral diet while managing my fistulae

Building healthier lives

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An enterocutaneous fistula (we call it a “fistula” for short) is when a small tunnel forms between your small intestine (where food goes) and your skin. This isn’t supposed to happen, so it needs special care.

Looking after your food and drinks when you have a fistula is different for every person. Your doctor or surgeon might have told you how much liquid should be coming out of your fistula, and they might have given you special food rules to follow. You might be waiting for an operation, or maybe not right now. All of this helps inform us of what you can eat and drink.

If your doctor or food team says you can eat or drink, they will need to keep a close eye on how much is coming out of your fistula and your toilet habits (opening your bowels or your stoma output).

Sometimes, your doctor might say it’s best not to eat or drink anything for a while. We know that can be hard, and we want to make sure you understand why and talk to you about it first. If not eating or drinking is too hard for you, your nutrition team can advise alternatives, but the risk of eating and drinking when the doctor has advised against it will need to be explained. We understand that not being able to eat and/or drink how you normally do could lead to feelings of exclusion.

Sometimes, you may have unpleasant symptoms such as nausea or vomiting which may mean that you do not want to eat or drink anything, or only very little amounts. This is okay, as we are providing all the nutrition that your body needs in your parenteral nutrition bags.

Over time, the food rules that your doctor has given you may change.

There are a few times when you **must** stop eating or drinking and call the nutrition team at QEHB, for instance:

- You see a lot more coming out of your fistula than usual
- Your fistula was closed, but it starts opening again
- Your stoma isn’t making much output anymore

- You get really bad abdominal pain, feel very bloated, or start vomiting and it's not normal for you

Not eating and drinking

When you are not able to eat and drink for a while this is a big change for you.

It is very common that you may/will experience lots of strong feelings about this change.

People who have experienced this change often talk about feeling excluded, sadness, anxiety or anger. It is normal to have some, or all of these feelings.

Coming to terms with the change often takes some time, weeks or possibly months.

Eating and drinking is often an important part of people's lives, as eating and/or drinking with friends and family is a way to spend enjoyable time together and strengthens relationships.

When you are not eating or drinking, you may feel uncomfortable being with other people during mealtimes. It is a very common reaction that lots of people experience.

It can be useful to talk to people you are close to about how you manage mealtimes, when you feel ready to do so.

What can help?

It is important to be kind to yourself when you are living through a big change.

Make time to do things that you like that are not about eating and drinking, getting into a routine is helpful.

Learning skills such as relaxation techniques can help you to cope with difficult days and look after yourself.

Talking or connecting with other people who have had periods of time not eating or drinking, or are living with it can be helpful, as they understand what you are facing.

You can always contact the nutrition team for advice and support if you are finding this very upsetting and difficult, without any positive change over time.

You may find it helpful to be referred to the psychologist who is a member of the nutrition team at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham (QEHB). Our psychologist can meet with you for an assessment and meet with you individually.

There are some resources and supports also available through PINNT (which can be found online). PINNT is a national organisation that provides support to those adapting to life on home artificial nutrition via forums, local and regional groups, email and telephone helpline, and through literature.

Clear fluids

It has been suggested that I can have **clear fluids**.

What can I have?

You have been advised to have clear fluids as these are easily absorbed in your bowel.

Added sugar drinks (Coca cola[®], fruit juices) and artificially sweetened 'no sugar' drinks (pepsi max[®], zero sugar energy drinks) may result in your fistula output increasing. These drinks need to be **consumed with caution**. If you have a high output from your fistulae, or if your fistulae output is increasing, then we advise you to stop taking these drinks and inform the nutrition team. If your fistulae output is low or none, then these drinks may be okay in **small amounts (sugar-containing drinks are typically better tolerated than artificially sweetened 'sugar free' ones)**.

The examples below are suitable clear fluids for you to choose from:

- Water
- Black tea (no milk)
- Black Coffee (no milk)
- Squash
- Smooth clear fruit juice e.g. Apple, cranberry or orange juice
- Flavoured water
- Oasis[®], Rubicon (still)[®], Vimto[®]
- Coconut water
- Herbal and fruit teas
- Clear soup / broth (no bits), clear miso soup (no bits)
- Hot cup of Marmite[®] or Bovril[®]
- Hot cup of water with dissolved stock cube or stock pot
- Still isotonic sport drinks e.g. Lucozade Sport[®], Gatorade Sport[®], PowerAde[®]
- Fortijuce or Ensure plus juice
- Ice lollies, ice cubes (no frozen fruit or ice-creams)

If you have any questions, or are unsure, you can always ask your nutrition team.

Free fluids

It has been suggested that I can have **free fluids**.

What can I have?

You can have everything on the 'clear fluids list' below as well as everything listed as free fluids below.

The examples below are suitable clear fluids:

- Water
- Black tea (no milk)
- Black coffee (no milk)
- Squash
- Smooth clear fruit juice e.g. Apple, cranberry or orange juice
- flavoured water
- Oasis[®], Rubicon (still)[®], Vimto[®]
- Coconut water
- Herbal and fruit teas
- Clear soup / broth (no bits), clear miso soup (no bits)
- Hot cup of Marmite[®] or Bovril[®]
- Hot cup of water with dissolved stock cube or stock pot
- Still isotonic sport drinks e.g. Lucozade Sport[®], Gatorade Sport[®], PowerAde[®]
- Fortijuce or Ensure plus juice
- Ice lollies, ice cubes (no frozen fruit or ice-creams)

The examples below are suitable free fluids:

The liquids need to be completely smooth with no bits. The liquids need to be low in fibre e.g. thin, smooth fruit juice with no bits and no smoothies.

- Whole milk / milk with Nesquik[®] or Milo[®]
- Milky coffee / latte / cappuccino
- Yoghurt drinks
- Hot chocolate
- Thin milkshakes e.g. Frijj[®], Yop[®], Yazoo[®]
- Horlicks[®] / Ovaline[®]

- Thin, smooth soups e.g. chicken, oxtail, sweet potato, butternut squash
- Thin, smooth fruit juice (no bits)
- Thin custard
- Jelly / milky jelly
- Smooth ice cream, smooth frozen yoghurt, sorbet (no bits)
- Ice lollies, lollies, frozen yoghurt lollies

If you have any questions, or are unsure, you can always ask your nutrition team.

Low fibre diet

It has been suggested that I can have a **low fibre diet**.

What can I have?

You can have clear or milky fluids. The liquids need to have no bits (e.g. thin juice without bits)

Clear fluids	Free fluids
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water• Black tea (no milk)• Black Coffee (no milk)• Squash• Smooth clear fruit juice e.g. Apple, cranberry or orange juice• Flavoured water• Oasis[®], Rubicon (still)[®], Vimto[®]• Coconut water• Herbal and fruit teas• Clear soup / broth (no bits), clear miso soup (no bits)• Hot cup of Marmite[®] or Bovril[®]• Hot cup of water with dissolved stock cube or stock pot• Still isotonic sport drinks e.g. Lucozade Sport[®], Gatorade Sport[®], PowerAde[®]• Fortijuce or Ensure plus juice• Ice lollies, ice cubes (no frozen fruit or ice-creams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole milk / milk with Nesquick[®] or Milo[®]• Milky coffee / latte / cappuccino• Yoghurt drinks• Hot chocolate• Thin milkshakes e.g. Frijj[®], Yop[®], Yazoo[®]• Horlicks[®] / Ovaline[®]• Thin, smooth soups e.g. chicken, oxtail, sweet potato, butternut squash• Thin, smooth fruit juice (no bits)• Thin custard• Jelly / milky jelly• Smooth ice cream, smooth frozen yoghurt, sorbet (no bits)• Ice lollies, lollies, frozen yoghurt lollies

Starchy foods

We sometimes find that 'starchy' foods helps to thicken up someone's fistulae or stoma output. So, if you are having difficulties with watery output or leaks then you may need to be more careful or selective with which foods you start to eat. **Foods like** white rice, white breads, bananas, cheeses, pasta, potatoes or other root vegetables (peeled), plain white crackers all may help thicken your output.

You may also choose low fibre options from the table below. These foods (on the left side of the table) **are also suitable if you have a stoma.**

The examples below are suitable low fibre foods (on the left sided column), and those not suitable foods (on the right column):

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apples (peeled)• Ripe bananas• Mango (peeled)• Melon• Nectarines (peeled)• Papaya• Pears (peeled)• Plums (peeled)• Watermelon (no pips)• Tinned fruit i.e. peaches, pears or mandarins• Smooth tomato-based sauce i.e. passata	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blackberries, blackcurrants, cherries, cranberries (fresh and dried)• Clementines• Figs• Grapefruit• Grapes• Kiwi• Mandarins, oranges,• Passion fruit• Pineapple• Pomegranate• Dried fruits such as prunes, sultanas, raisins• Raspberries• Rhubarb• Strawberries

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All vegetables need to be well cooked and peeled • Aubergine (peeled and deseeded) • Avocado • Broccoli and cauliflower (no stalks) • Butternut squash • Zucchini, cucumber (peeled and seeded) • Carrots • Parsnips • Onion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asparagus • Baby corn • Beetroot • Celery • Coleslaw • Garlic (whole/raw) • Gherkins • Ginger • Lettuce, salad leaves, spinach, rocket • Mushrooms • Okra • Olives • Onion (whole/raw/undercooked) • Peas • Pickled onions • Runner beans • Soya beans • Sweetcorn • Tomatoes • All other skins, pips, and seeds, tough stalks, raw vegetables

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Breads and cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice Krispies® • Cornflakes® • Cocopops® • Frosties® • Ready Brek® • White breads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal/wholegrain and bran cereals e.g. All Bran®, Bran flakes and Weetabix® • Cereals with dried fruit • Rolled oats, porridge, granola • Wholemeal flour, chickpea flour • Avoid all bread, wraps, pitta, rolls, baguettes and bagels • Crumpets, muffins, scones, croissants • Seeded crackers, oat and rice cakes, cereal bars
Potato, rice and pasta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peeled white or sweet potatoes • Peeled yams • White rice • White pasta • Noodles, e.g. egg, rice, udon • White couscous • Buckwheat, millet, tapioca, sago, semolina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skins of jacket potatoes • Brown and wild rice • Wholemeal pasta • Hash browns • Barley, spelt, quinoa • Bulgar wheat, farro, freekeh

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All types of fish, chicken, pork turkey • Beef should be minced or slow-cooked to soften • Smooth paté and liver sausage • Eggs • Smooth nut butters • Well-cooked red split lentils • Smooth houmous • Alternative meat products (Quorn®, Richmond®) • Tofu • White bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin and bones of fish • Sausages • Quorn, soya mince • Whole lentils, chickpeas, kidney and baked beans • All nuts • All seeds crunchy nut butters
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All types of milk • Cream, sour cream • All cheese (without dried fruit or nuts) • Butter, margarine, spreads • Smooth yoghurt • Smooth ice cream and sorbet • Custard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheese containing dried fruit or nuts • Yoghurt containing whole fruit, nuts, seeds or pips • Ice cream and sorbet containing nuts, seeds and whole fruits

	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Sweet treats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft sponge cake • Plain biscuits e.g. rich tea or custard creams • Jelly or milk jelly • Boiled sweets • Milk chocolate, • Fudge • Rice pudding • Flavoured Mousse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal cakes and biscuits • Hot cross buns • Tea cakes • Crumpets • Cereal bars, flapjacks • Jelly made with fresh berries • Chocolate with nuts and dried fruit • Nougat
Savoury treats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melt in the mouth crisps like Quavers®, Skips®, Pringles® • Plain bread sticks • Mini cheddars • Smooth dips e.g. sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuts, seeds, popcorn • Bombay mix • Dips that contain whole tomatoes • Cucumbers and onions • Cheese straws
Condiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomato ketchup, barbecue sauce, mayonnaise • Smooth mustard • Salt and pepper • Gravy • Lemon curd or honey • Smooth nut butters • Marmite, Bovril® • Nutella® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickles and relishes • Chutneys with whole pieces • Wholegrain mustard • Stalks and leaves of fresh herbs • Jam with seeds • marmalade with peel • salad dressing with wholegrain mustard

If you have any questions, or are unsure, you can always ask your nutrition team.

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