

Know About a Low Fibre Diet for Partial Bowel Obstruction

For patients and caregivers

Read this pamphlet to know:

- What is bowel obstruction?
- Helpful tips to maintain good bowel function
- What is a low fibre diet?



Your health care team may ask you to follow a low fibre diet if you:

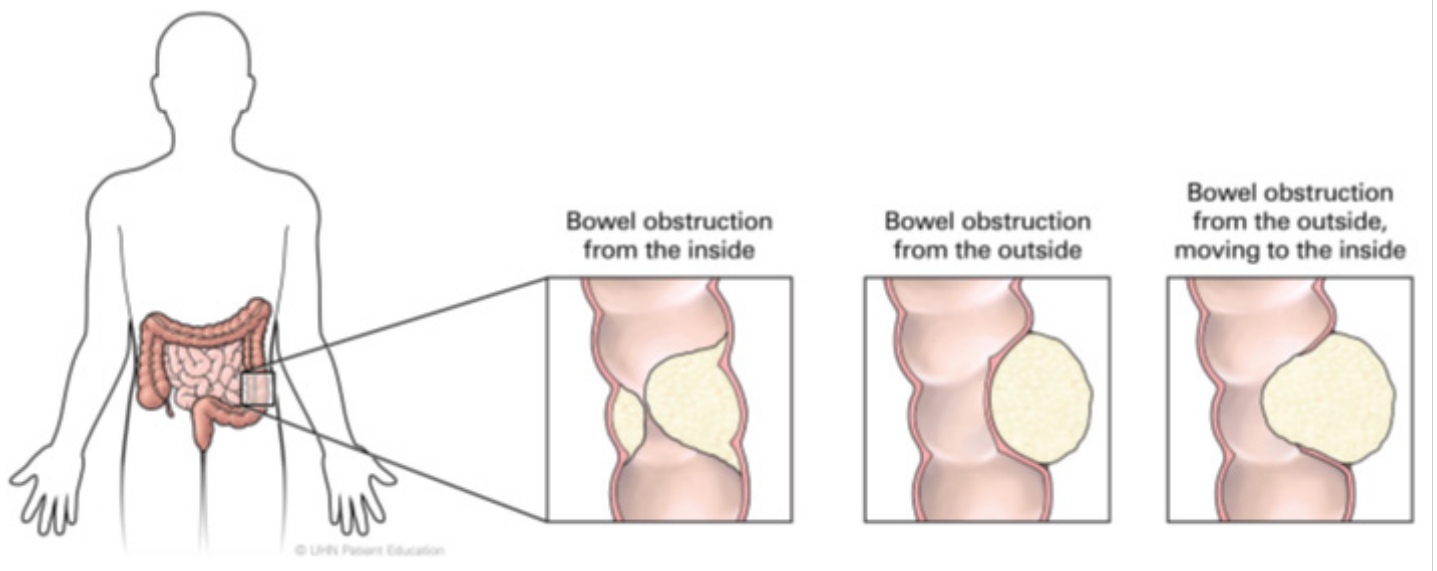
- Have a partial bowel obstruction
- Are at risk for a partial bowel obstruction

What is bowel obstruction?

Bowel obstruction is when your small or large bowel is partly or fully blocked. The bowel may become narrow and blocked (obstructed) due to:

- cancer
- scarring from surgery
- radiation treatment
- pressure from fluid in the abdomen (belly). See the image below

When the bowel is blocked, poo cannot move through the bowel normally.



What are some of the symptoms (signs) of bowel obstruction?

- No bowel movement (poo) for more than 2 days (if this is different from your normal pattern)
- Nausea (feeling like you will throw up)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Abdominal (stomach) pain
- A bloated stomach (stomach feels swollen or very full)
- Not passing gas

If your bowel becomes narrow or blocked, it may be hard for poo to pass through the bowel. You may need to make changes to the food you eat. You may need to avoid foods that may cause or contribute to a bowel obstruction. Fibre can increase the size of your poo. A low fibre diet may make it easier for stool (poo) to pass.

Helpful tips to maintain good bowel function

- ✓ Stay hydrated. Getting enough fluid helps keep you hydrated and may help keep your poo soft. Drink at least 6 cups or 1.5 litres of fluid per day. Fluids are any liquids that do not have alcohol in them.
- ✓ Chew your food well. The smaller your food is when it reaches your bowel, the easier it is to digest. Eating slowly may make it easier to chew your food well.
- ✓ Eat small meals and include snacks throughout the day. Eating smaller portions may help reduce discomfort, such as pain or bloating. For example, eat 5 or 6 small meals or snacks during the day.
- ✓ Avoid skins, seeds and membranes (the skin or outer part around a piece of orange or grapefruit) from fruits and vegetables. These are high in fibre and increase the size of your poo.

- ✓ If you are unable to eat well, ask your health care team if you should take a daily multivitamin or mineral supplement.
- ✓ Beverages with caffeine may cause cramps and upset your stomach. Avoid these beverages if you experience these symptoms. Caffeinated drinks include coffee, tea, some soft drinks (such as Coca Cola) and energy drinks.
- ✓ Avoid fried foods and greasy foods. These foods won't cause an obstruction, but they may make you feel bloated and full. If you feel full, it may be hard for you to eat your next meal.
- ✓ Make a list of the foods that do not cause you to have symptoms and those foods that do. This can help you choose foods that work well for your body.

Do not take fibre supplements as they may increase the size of your poo. Some examples of fibre supplements include Psyllium and Inulin. Only take fibre supplements if they are prescribed (ordered) by your doctor.

- If certain foods do not agree with you, it's OK to avoid them. Everyone's diet may be different.
- Take all bowel routine medicines as prescribed by your health care team. These diet tips are to be used with these medicines.

What is a low fibre diet?

Fibre adds bulk to your poo. Too much fibre in your diet can make your poo bigger which may increase your risk of bowel obstruction and make your partial bowel obstruction worse.

Your health care team will tell you if you need a low fibre diet or a fluid diet.

Low fibre diet

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
<p>Vegetables</p> <p>Remove all skins, seeds and stalks.</p> <p>Vegetables should be well cooked and soft.</p> <p>No raw vegetables</p> <p>You may have 4 servings of vegetables and fruits per day. A serving is ½ cup.</p>	<p>Well cooked vegetables without seeds or skins: Asparagus tips, beets, carrots, cauliflower*florets, eggplant, wax beans (canned green or yellow), potato (white), potato (sweet – in ¼ cup portion), radish, rutabagas, squash, pumpkin, sweet bell peppers, tomato, turnip, zucchini</p> <p>Tomato paste and sauce without seeds</p> <p>Vegetable juice *(Read page 13 for information on juicing and smoothies)</p> <p>Soups made from vegetables on the “choose list”</p> <p>Herbs and spices</p>	<p>Avoid all vegetables with seeds, skins and strings (raw or cooked):</p> <p>Artichoke, alfalfa sprouts, asparagus stems, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, green beans, green peas, snow peas, broccoli*, brussels sprouts*, bok choy, cabbage*, celery, corn, endive, escarole, lettuce, mushrooms, onion*, okra, parsnip, peas, spinach, sauerkraut, Swiss chard</p> <p>Leafy greens (spinach, romaine lettuce, kale)</p> <p>Soups with foods from the “avoid list”</p>

***May cause gas**

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
<p>Fruits</p> <p>Remove all skins, seeds and membranes.</p> <p>You may have 4 servings of vegetables and fruits per day. A serving is ½ cup.</p>	<p>Fruit juice without pulp (including prune juice) * (Read page 13 for information on juicing and smoothies)</p> <p>Peeled fresh fruit: Apple, apricot, ripe banana, pear (bosc, bartlett), peach, nectarine, honeydew, watermelon, cantaloupe, mango, papaya, plums, oranges (without membranes)</p> <p>Canned fruit: Peaches, mandarin oranges, pears, apple sauce</p>	<p>All dried fruit: dates, prunes, raisins, figs, apricots, coconut</p> <p>Asian pear, pineapple, kiwi, grapes, cherries, rhubarb, blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, grapefruit, raspberries, strawberries, persimmons, pomegranate, avocado</p>

***May cause gas**

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
Breads, Cereals and Grains	<p>Baked goods and breads made with white flour and other allowed ingredients: White, egg, French, Italian, bagels, biscuits, buns, crackers, muffins, pancakes, waffles, dinner rolls, crepes, scones, tortilla (small), English muffin, light rye bread, 60% whole wheat bread, pita, hamburger/hotdog buns, naan bread (small), sourdough</p> <p>Cereals: Rice Krispies, Cheerios, cream of wheat, cornflakes, Special K (plain), oatmeal</p> <p>Grains: All pasta noodles (spaghetti, macaroni, fettuccini, etc.), couscous, egg noodles, rice noodles, white rice</p>	<p>Baked goods and breads made with whole grains (for example, whole grain whole wheat)</p> <p>Any product label that says "high fibre"</p> <p>Breads with nuts, seeds, dried fruit, added bran, cracked wheat, or other hard to digest food particles, dark rye, pumpernickel, spelt bread</p> <p>Cereals: Bran buds, all bran, granola, any cereal with "Fibre" in the title, any cereal with nuts, seeds, coconut or dried fruit, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies</p> <p>Grains: Brown or wild rice, barley, whole wheat pasta, quinoa, buckwheat, bulgur, popcorn, corn meal, polenta, wheat germ, bran, whole wheat pasta, pasta with added fibre</p>

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
<p>Meat, poultry, fish, and meat alternatives</p> <p>Cook meat, poultry, and fish by roasting, stewing, broiling or poaching to keep it moist.</p>	<p>Tender beef, pork, veal, lamb, chicken, turkey, fish</p> <p>Shellfish that is tender and easy to chew: shrimp, lobster, crab</p> <p>Eggs</p> <p>Tofu</p>	<p>Tough or over-cooked meat, sausages and other processed meats with casings or skins, fish skin and bones, tough skin, meats with gristle</p>

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
<p>Milk and Milk Alternatives</p>	<p>Milk, milkshakes (made with allowed ingredients), cheese, yogurt, Greek yogurt, skyr (Icelandic style yogurt). Allowed yogurt flavours include: plain, vanilla, cappuccino, peach. All other flavoured yogurt must be smooth with no pieces of fruit, pudding, custard, ice cream, sherbet, Ovaltine, hot chocolate</p> <p>Soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, cashew milk, coconut milk</p>	<p>Yogurt with seeds (strawberry, blueberry, raspberry), yogurt with other fruits to avoid (coconut, pineapple, cherry)</p> <p>Cheese with seeds</p>

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
<p>Beans, lentils, nuts, seeds</p>	<p>Smooth nut butter (peanut, almond, cashew) 1 tablespoon at a time</p> <p>Tahini (sesame butter)</p> <p>Commercial hummus well pureed (limit to 2 tablespoons)</p>	<p>Whole, cooked, or pureed: soybeans (edamame), fresh peas, fresh beans, dry beans, dry peas, chickpeas, lentils. All nuts (ground or whole)</p>

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
Beverages	<p>Fruit juice without pulp</p> <p>Vegetable juice without pulp</p> <p>Oral nutrition supplements like Boost and Ensure, Boost Fruit Flavoured Beverage</p> <p>Carnation Breakfast Essentials</p> <p>Mineral water, Gatorade, Ovaltine, hot chocolate, coffee, tea</p> <p>Broth, cream soups with allowed ingredients</p>	<p>Carbonated drinks for example, Coca-Cola, Perrier</p>

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
Fats	<p>Butter, margarine, vegetable oils, mayonnaise, shortening, salad dressing (without seeds), tahini</p>	<p>None</p>

	Foods to eat	Foods to avoid
Other foods	<p>Jell-O, honey, jelly or jam without seeds or skins, mustard, ketchup, vinegar, BBQ sauce, Popsicles, alcohol, sugar (white, brown), maple syrup, molasses, caramels, potato chips, pretzels, chocolate without nuts, marshmallows, hard candy, caramels</p> <p>Baked desserts with allowed ingredients:</p> <p>Donuts, plain cookies, cheesecake, angel food cake</p> <p>Condiments: vinegar, ketchup, mustard, BBQ sauce, soy sauce, hoisin</p> <p>Herbs and spices</p>	<p>Pie with fruit filling</p> <p>Cookies with nuts and dried fruit</p> <p>Trail mix</p> <p>Jam with seeds or peels (marmalade, strawberry, raspberry, blueberry)</p> <p>Popcorn</p> <p>Olives</p> <p>Pickles</p> <p>Chutney</p> <p>Relish</p> <p>Coconut</p>

Your doctor will tell you how long you need to follow a low fibre diet, and when you may go back to your usual diet without any limits.

Fluid diet

If you will be on a fluid diet for more than 5 to 7 days, consider drinking oral nutrition supplements.

If you are asked to follow a fluid only diet, speak to your registered dietitian.

	Fluids to drink	Fluids to avoid
Fruits and vegetables	All fruit and vegetable juice without pulp, nectar	All others
Milk and milk alternatives	Milk, chocolate milk, soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, buttermilk, milkshakes, yogurt drinks, egg nog	All others
Desserts and sweets	Smooth yogurt, custards, puddings, sherbet, ice cream, Popsicles, frozen yogurt, Jell-O, fruit whip, ice milk, honey, plain sugar, hard candy, maple syrup	All others
Beverages	Oral nutrition supplements such as Ensure, Boost, Boost Fruit Flavoured Beverage, Carnation Breakfast Essentials, Resource Diabetic, hot chocolate, Ovaltine, tea, coffee, sport drinks	All others
Soups	Strained cream soups, bouillon, consommé, broth	All others

How to add foods back into the diet after following fluid diet

There is no right or wrong way to add foods back into your diet. Some foods may cause symptoms for some people. Not everyone will have these same symptoms when they eat these same foods. How quickly you can add foods back into your diet will be based on your symptoms and how you feel once you start to add these foods back into your diet.

Your health care team will tell you when it is OK to eat solid foods again. Continue to drink fluids and start by adding small amounts of low fibre starch foods to your diet:

- Step 1**
- White rice, plain white bread, plain pasta noodles, plain cookies, plain crackers, low fibre cereals like: Cheerios, Rice Krispies or Corn Flakes. See “breads, cereals and grains” section for more examples.

If these foods do not make your symptoms worse, or cause you to have new symptoms, add protein foods to your diet:

- Step 2**
- Chicken or turkey without skin, soft flaky fish, eggs, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt
 - See “milk and milk alternatives” and “meat, poultry, fish and meat alternatives” for more examples of protein foods to include

If, these foods do not make your symptoms worse, or cause you to have new symptoms, add vegetables and fruits into your diet:

- Step 3**
- Choose foods from the “vegetables” and “fruits” section

Oral nutrition supplements

You may need to drink oral nutrition supplements if you will be on a fluid diet for longer than 5 to 7 days.

Examples of oral nutrition supplements are: Ensure or Boost. These drinks give you nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals.

Ask your registered dietitian how many supplements you need to drink in a day.

If you eat solid food but are not able to eat your usual amount of food, you may need to drink oral nutrition supplements. Your registered dietitian can tell you how many supplements you need to drink in a day.

Juicing and smoothies:

If you want to make homemade juice, make sure all the pulp, skins and seeds are removed from the fruit and vegetables.

Do not make smoothies with lots of fruits and vegetables as this will give you too much fibre at one time.

Even if the pieces of fruit and vegetables are small after blending, all the fibre is still there. Remember, too much fibre will increase the size of your poo.

If you want to make smoothies, choose only fruits from the "Foods to eat" section of the fruit or vegetable list in a ½ cup portion

Vitamins and minerals:

If you are unable to eat enough, talk to your health care team. You may need to take a daily multivitamin and mineral to get all of the nutrients your body needs.

If you have an ileostomy or colostomy

Some patients need an ileostomy or a colostomy. An ileostomy is an opening made during surgery to bring part of your small bowel to the surface of your skin. This opening is called a stoma. Waste (poo) and gas from your small

bowel, pass out of the stoma. Poo and gas collects in a pouch that sticks to your skin. If you have an ileostomy, follow a low fibre diet for the first 6 to 8 weeks after your surgery. A low fibre diet will allow your body to heal after surgery. See UHN's [Eating after Your Ileostomy](#) resource (D-5196).

A colostomy is an opening made during surgery that brings part of your large bowel to the surface of your skin. This opening is called a stoma. Waste (poo) and gas from your large bowel will pass out of the stoma and collect in a pouch that sticks to your skin. If you have a colostomy, after surgery, unless your health care team tells you to follow a special diet, you do not have to change your diet.

If you have a lot of watery poo from your ileostomy or colostomy, (also called high output), your health care team may ask you to follow a low fibre diet.

If you have an ileostomy or colostomy, you can still be at risk of having bowel obstruction or a partial bowel obstruction. If this happens, your health care team may tell you to follow a fluid diet or a low fibre diet.

To learn more about bowel obstruction and how to manage symptoms with diet and medications, watch the [Bowel Obstruction for Women with Gynecologic Cancer](#) video series through this link:

- <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaLgrtXadEF8JI-TtwYcaaYM1DnxksUI8>

Important: This is not a full list of brands or products. The University Health Network does not recommend one brand over another and is not responsible for any products listed. Please contact each company directly to find out more about their products.

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca

© 2020 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. You may print 1 copy of this brochure for non-commercial and personal use only.

Form: D-5719 | Author: Sarah Buchanan, Deanna Zidar, Ann MacGillivray, Dr. Stephanie Lheureux, Nazlin Jivraj | Revised: 02/2020