

Living with Short Bowel Syndrome (SBS): What to eat and drink

This guide is for people with Short Bowel Syndrome who have some colon remaining. It can also help your family and caregivers.

Use it along with advice from your health care team to:

- ✓ Manage your symptoms of SBS
- ✓ Meet your body's needs for energy, nutrients and fluid

If you have questions or need help, speak with your doctor or the Registered Dietitian on your health care team.

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What is Short Bowel Syndrome (SBS)?

SBS is a group of symptoms that happen when part of your bowel:

- is removed by surgery, or
- is not working properly due to disease

You may not have enough bowel remaining to absorb the amount of nutrients and water that your body needs.

With SBS, you may have a lot of diarrhea (watery poop, loose stool), gas and bloating. You may have other symptoms too. Your symptoms will depend on:

- what part of your bowel remains
- how long it is
- how well it is working

Why is my diet important?

Your diet is an important part of living well with SBS. The way you eat, and the food and drinks you choose can help you:

- ✓ manage your SBS symptoms
- ✓ prevent serious health problems such as dehydration and malnutrition

	What is it?	What are the signs?
Dehydration	Your body is losing more fluid than it takes in. Your body doesn't have enough water and other fluids to meet its needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feeling thirsty• feeling tired or dizzy• passing less urine (pee)• dark urine• dry lips and mouth• rapid weight loss• headache• kidney stones
Malnutrition	Your bowel is not absorbing enough nutrients and calories (energy) to meet your body's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feeling weak and tired• losing weight

What kind of diet helps SBS?

There isn't a single diet for all people with SBS. In general, a helpful diet for someone with SBS and some colon remaining is:

- higher in carbohydrates such as grains and cereals
- higher in protein from foods such as meat, poultry, fish and eggs
- lower in fats such as butter and oil

A Registered Dietitian can help you choose foods and plan meals that meet your needs. The guidelines and food choices on the next pages can help.

What are some guidelines for eating?

Eat 5 or 6 small meals, spaced out over the day.

- Small, frequent meals are easier for your body to digest.
- Because your digestive system cannot absorb everything you eat and drink, you may need to eat more food than usual to get enough nutrients.

Eat solid food at meals and drink fluids between meals.

- During meals, eat mostly solid foods and drink very little fluid (sips only, if possible).
- Drink fluids between meals, 30 to 45 minutes before or after a meal. You should aim to drink about _____ cups of fluid a day.
- Having solid food and fluids together can rush the food through your body and cause diarrhea.

Eat slowly and chew your food well.

- Chewing is an important first step in digesting food.

Keep track of your progress!

- Keep a food and symptom diary to see how foods and drinks affect your symptoms. This helps you decide which ones are best for you.
- Keep a record of your weight. Weigh yourself each week. If you are losing weight, call your doctor or dietitian.

What food and drinks are good choices?

Good choices are more easily absorbed and may help to reduce diarrhea.

Choose foods that are high in starch (complex carbohydrates), high in protein and moderate in fat.

- Complex carbohydrates include white or brown rice, white or whole wheat bread, pasta, peeled potatoes and unsweetened cereals.
- Protein is found in fish, meat, poultry (chicken and turkey) and eggs.
- Fat is found in some foods or may be added. Choose lean meats and trim all visible fat. Use small amounts of fats such as oil, butter and margarine.

Choose foods with soluble fibre.

- Soluble fibre absorbs water in your bowels and forms a gel. This helps reduce diarrhea.
- Some foods with soluble fibre are oatmeal, bananas, white rice, barley and applesauce.
- Insoluble fibre may be harder to digest and can increase your diarrhea.
- Some foods with insoluble fibre are whole grain bread, nuts, seeds, and fruit and vegetable skins and seeds. Eat less of these foods.

Drink Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS).

- You need fluids to stay healthy and prevent dehydration. ORS are good choices for fluids. They contain a mixture of water, salt and sugar that your bowel can easily absorb. ORS help your body absorb more fluid.
- You can make your own ORS (ask your dietitian for a recipe) or buy ORS such as Gastrolyte or Pedialyte.

Important!

Eat a variety of foods!

This helps your remaining bowel slowly learn to absorb nutrients better over time. This is called adaptation.

What food and drinks should I limit or avoid?

Some food and drinks can make symptoms worse or cause other problems.

Limit fluids that are not easily absorbed.

- Water, coffee, tea, juice and pop may help with thirst, but they are not absorbed as easily as ORS. They can make diarrhea worse.
- Drink small amounts of these fluids, unless your health care team gives you different advice.

Avoid foods and drinks that are high in sugar.

- Sweet food and drinks pull water into your bowel to dilute the sugar. This can make diarrhea worse.

Limit foods that are high in fat.

- Some foods like dressings, sauces and chocolate are high in fat. Others absorb fat from frying, such as fried chicken, French fries and potato chips. Large amounts of these foods can make diarrhea worse.

Avoid lactose if needed

- Lactose is a sugar found in dairy products like milk and soft cheese. In some people it causes diarrhea, bloating and gas.
- Try lactose-free products or have small amounts of foods or drinks with lactose during your day.

Limit foods with oxalates if you have had kidney stones.


- Oxalates are found in many foods from plants. When you have SBS with some colon remaining, oxalates can build up in your urine and kidney stones can develop.
- Your dietitian can give you a list of high oxalate foods to limit.

Make shopping easier!

Use the food guide on page 7 and 8 to help you choose food and drinks that are right for you!

My food guide

Use this chart to choose foods that help reduce your symptoms.

 Helpful Tip!	If you want to try a food from the Avoid or Limit list, try a small amount and see how your body reacts. If your symptoms don't worsen, you can keep eating that food.
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Type of food	✓ Good choices	✗ Avoid or Limit
Starches Breads, baked goods, grains and cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • white or whole wheat bread, bagels and English muffins • white or whole wheat pasta • white, brown or wild rice • tortillas, pita, naan • low sugar cereals (less than 8 g sugar in a serving) • plain oatmeal, cream of wheat • crackers, rice crackers, rice cakes, pretzels • potato chips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rye or whole grain bread • high sugar cereals (more than 8 g sugar in a serving) • donuts, sweet rolls, pastries, cookies, cake
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fresh vegetables (cooked, or raw if you can tolerate), like carrots, zucchini, eggplant, winter squash, peppers, cucumber, tomatoes • canned vegetables • potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, taro (you may need to limit if you have had kidney stones) • vegetable soup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high fibre, stringy vegetables such as celery and leafy greens • high oxalate vegetables such as spinach (if you have had kidney stones)

Type of food	✓ Good choices	✗ Avoid or Limit
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fresh fruit (about 1 cup a day) such as bananas, melon (cantaloupe, honeydew), peeled apples, peeled pears • unsweetened canned or pureed fruits such as apple sauce and fruit salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dried fruits, fruits canned in syrup • jam and marmalade • high oxalate fruits such as berries (if you have had kidney stones)
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meat (beef, pork, lamb) • poultry (chicken, turkey) • fish and shellfish • eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fried meats, chicken and fish • legumes, beans, nuts, seeds, nut or seed butters
Dairy and soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cheese • cottage cheese • cream cheese • plain or low sugar yogurt, kefir • milk (small amounts, low lactose if you tolerate it better) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sweetened dairy products (such as chocolate or strawberry flavoured) • soy products
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oral rehydration solutions such as Gastrolyte or Pedialyte • broth • Gatorade G2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drinks with sugars (cola, pop, fruit juice, fruit drinks, regular Gatorade or Powerade) • drinks with artificial sweeteners (aspartame or sugar alcohols such as xylitol, sorbitol and mannitol) • water • coffee, tea • alcohol

Type of food	✓ Good choices	✗ Avoid or Limit
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small amounts of fats and oils as tolerated, like vegetable oil, salad dressing, butter, margarine, mayonnaise • avocado (small amount) • herbs, spices, salt, pepper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chocolate • black pepper • soy sauce (if you have had kidney stones) • table sugar, honey, syrup • hard candy

What if I have questions about my diet or need help?

For questions or help with your diet, call your Registered Dietitian.

For concerns about SBS symptoms, signs of dehydration or weight loss, call your doctor right away.



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