

LOW FIBRE GUIDANCE FOR COLORECTAL CANCER PATIENTS

As part of your treatment you have been advised to follow a low fibre (or low 'roughage') diet. This may be whilst you are waiting for surgery or undergoing chemotherapy, or may be in order to reduce the risk of your bowel becoming blocked.

This booklet provides guidance on how to do this.

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of fruit, vegetables and cereal products which are not digested but continue to pass through the gut to help add bulk and soften our stools. Fibre is fermented in the large bowel which causes the production of gas (or 'wind').

Why do I need a low fibre diet?

A low fibre diet can slow the rate at which food passes through the gut, which may help to prevent diarrhoea. It also reduces the bulk of your stool, making it easier for the stool to pass through a stricture (narrowed part of your bowel). If your bowel is at risk of blockage, a low fibre intake **may** therefore reduce the risk.

A low fibre diet can reduce the amount of gas produced in the large bowel and so help to reduce symptoms such as bloating and stomach discomfort.

How long will I need to follow the diet?

This can vary but in many cases it is not required long term. If you are advised to continue for a longer period of time, you should be referred to a dietitian for further advice. Your consultant or specialist nurse can refer you. If you are vegetarian and are advised to follow a low fibre diet, you should be referred to the dietitian.

Will I become constipated?

A low fibre diet still contains some fibre. It is however very important that you ensure a good fluid intake whilst on this diet. You should aim to have 8-10 glasses (1.5 – 2 litres) of fluid per day. This can include water, squash, fruit juice, tea, coffee or fizzy drinks.

If you are concerned about constipation or are having trouble opening your bowels, contact your doctor or specialist nurse for advice. Sometimes it is necessary to replace the fibre in your diet with a softening agent to prevent, or treat, constipation.

Which foods are fibre free?

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, cheese, milk and smooth yoghurts/fromage frais, butter/margarine and oils do not contain fibre and can be eaten as usual.

Try to ensure a regular meal pattern and include a variety of foods to ensure a balanced diet. Try not to eat all fruit and vegetables at one meal – spread them out across the day.

	Low fibre foods allowed	High fibre foods to avoid
Bread & flour	White flour, white bread, pastry made with white flour, Yorkshire puddings (with white flour)	Wholemeal, granary, rye or brown breads. High fibre white or '50:50' breads. Pastry made with wholemeal flour
Breakfast Cereals	Cornflakes, Frosties, Rice Krispies, Cheerios, Special K, Sugar Puffs	All wholegrain breakfast cereals – Weetabix, All Bran, Shredded Wheat, Branflakes, Shreddies, muesli, porridge, Ready Brek, any cereals with added fruit or nuts
Pasta & rice	White rice and pasta	Brown rice, whole wheat pasta
Biscuits & crackers	Biscuits made with white flour, e.g. Rich tea, custard creams, shortbread, cream crackers	Wholegrain biscuits or biscuits containing dried fruit or nuts, e.g. Digestives, Hob Nobs, flapjack, fig rolls, oatcakes, cereal bars
Cakes & desserts	Cakes made with white flour, e.g. sponge cakes, plain scones. Milk puddings, custard, ice cream (without nuts), jelly, mousses, smooth yoghurt or fromage frais	Cakes containing wholemeal flour, dried fruit or nuts, fruit cakes, mince pies. Sponge puddings or pies containing high fibre fruits, yoghurt/fromage frais containing muesli
Fruit	Fruit juice (as desired) Lower fibre fruits – maximum 2 portions per day , e.g. peeled apple, peeled pear, banana, cherries, grapes, melon, peaches & nectarines (flesh only), tinned fruit. Smoothies (maximum 1 glass/day)	All dried fruits (apricots, currants, sultanas, prunes etc), berry fruits, citrus fruits, kiwi
Vegetables	Carrots, cauliflower florets, swede, turnip, marrow, cooked onions, beetroot, celery, mushrooms, courgette, cucumber, lettuce, tinned tomatoes, leeks, peppers, cress, radish	Cabbage, broccoli, sprouts, sweetcorn, green beans, avocado, aubergine, parsnip, sweet potato, Quorn Pureed or liquidised vegetables (unless listed opposite)
Pulses	None	All pulses, peas, baked beans, broad beans, lentils, chick peas, red kidney beans
Nuts & seeds	None	All nuts and seeds, coconut, peanut butter, marzipan

Potatoes	Peeled boiled potatoes, jacket potato (do not eat skin), mashed potato, roast potato	Potatoes cooked in skins Chips
Soups	Tinned cream of tomato, mushroom, chicken, oxtail	Fresh or carton soups, any soup containing vegetables or lentils
Snacks & chocolate	Potato crisps, chocolate (plain, milk or white), sweets	Popcorn, tortilla chips, Bombay mix, Twiglets, any chocolate or sweet containing dried fruit, coconut or nuts, cereal bars
Spreads	Jam, marmalade, honey, Marmite, lemon curd	Peanut butter, other nut butters

What if my appetite is poor?

If your appetite is poor or you are losing weight, try the following:

- Try to eat 'little and often' throughout the day. Aim for 3 small meals each day with additional snacks mid morning, mid afternoon and during the evening
- Choose high calorie foods that are 'energy dense'. Avoid low fat, low calorie or sugar free products
- Choose nourishing drinks in preference to tea, coffee or water. Try milky drinks (milkshakes, hot chocolate or coffee made with full fat milk, malted drinks)

If you are concerned about your appetite or weight loss, request a referral to the dietitian for further advice.

REINTRODUCTION OF FIBRE

As your treatment progresses (or if you have been symptom free for a month), you may be advised that you can relax your low fibre diet. This should be done gradually. This process may help to identify what types and quantities of fibre you can tolerate. You should stop the reintroduction if symptoms reoccur.

Week 1

Try eating an extra portion of fruit each day (i.e. maximum 3 portions/day). Remember to spread them out across the day. You can reintroduce:

<u>Fruit</u>	<u>Portion Size</u>
Kiwi	1 fruit
Strawberries	Up to 10
Raspberries	Handful
Satsuma/Tangerine	1 fruit

Raisins/Sultanas/Currants 1 tablespoon

In addition, try leaving the skin on apples and pears.

Week 2

Try a higher fibre breakfast cereal, e.g. porridge (one portion per day). Continue to avoid very high fibre cereals (e.g. All Bran, Branflakes, Shredded Wheat).

Week 3

Replace white bread with wholemeal or brown, if desired. Continue to avoid granary bread.

If you have any difficulties with the reintroduction, or are advised to follow the low fibre diet long term, you should be referred to the dietitian for further advice. Discuss this with your consultant or specialist nurse.

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