

# Nutritional advice

after bowel surgery



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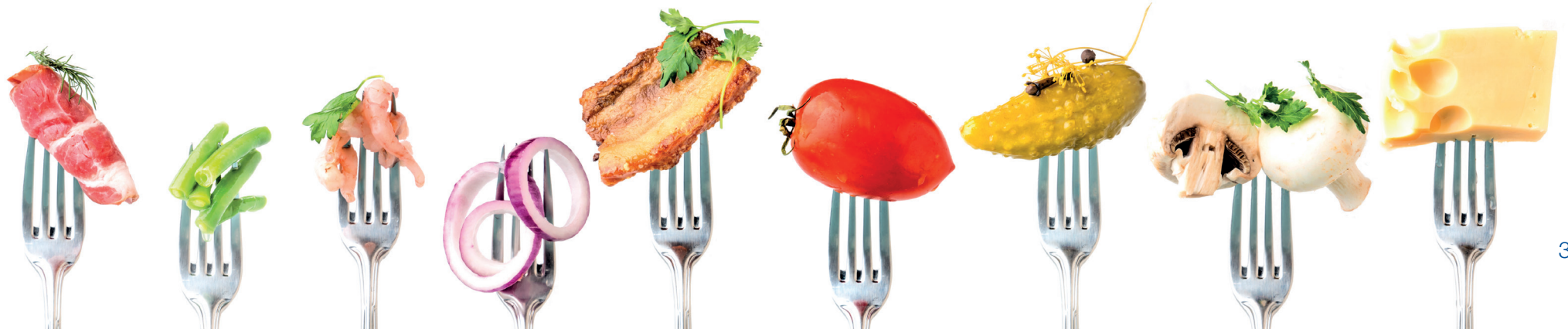
# Introduction

It is important to remember that food and eating should be an enjoyable experience. Many new ostomates can feel anxious about what they can and can't eat and what the effects will be on their stoma output. The aim of this booklet is to provide reassurance and to encourage a varied and healthy diet.

## Reintroduction of food after surgery

After any operation it can take some time for your appetite to return and after bowel surgery it also takes a while for the gut to recover from the trauma. In many hospitals there are methods for the reintroduction of fluids and foods to try to build up your confidence and to allow the bowel to settle down, at this early stage it is often easier to cope with a light or easily digestible diet, i.e. not too spicy, fatty, highly flavoured or too high in fibre. If you have lost a lot of weight before and/or immediately following surgery then it will be important to try to regain a healthy weight.

- Eat small meals and have light snacks between meals
- Make sure you include some foods rich in protein such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese and milk at each meal to aid healing
- Eat in a relaxed setting, eat slowly and chew your food well to aid digestion
- Limit fruit, vegetables, wholegrain bread and cereals, coffee and other bowel stimulants such as alcohol initially
- Drink plenty of fluid - at least 2 litres a day



## Eating a healthy diet

Once your appetite has returned and your stoma output is normalising you can gradually reintroduce a more varied diet. Include a range of foods from each of the following food groups to make sure you have a balanced diet:

- Protein rich foods such as meat, fish, lentils and beans
- Protein and calcium rich dairy foods such as milk, cheese, eggs and yoghurt
- Starchy foods such as bread, rice, potatoes, pasta
- Fruit and vegetables
- Fat - if you are underweight, fat is an important source of energy. Include foods such as butter, milk and olive oil when cooking. Oily fish can also ensure an adequate intake of omega-3 essential fatty acids. If you are overweight you should limit your fat intake.

Keep to current recommended limits for alcohol consumption (no more than 1-2 units per day for women and 2-3 units for men) as too much alcohol may make bag changes difficult and can lead to dehydration.

## Watching what you eat

In the early days of managing your stoma you may be embarrassed by certain sounds, smells and the amount or consistency of your stoma output. Over time and as your gut settles down you will learn which foods cause changes in your stool consistency, excessive gas or odour or which pass through the gut completely unaltered. Some foods can also change the colour of bag contents, such as beetroot. Please see pages 14-15 for a quick reference food and drink chart.

## Wind

Wind is a normal product of digestion but there are certain tips to follow which may help to avoid excessive amounts:

- Eat regular meals in a relaxed environment
- Eat slowly and chew food thoroughly
- Try not to talk or to gulp food down as you may swallow more air
- Avoid fizzy drinks
- Add peppermint essence (available from the chemist) to hot water and sip slowly
- Drink peppermint or fennel tea
- You may wish to try chewing charcoal tablets

Certain foods commonly cause wind but every individual responds differently. Please refer to the quick reference food and drink chart on page 14-15 for more information.



## Eating a healthy diet continued

### Odour

Many ostomates worry about odour. If the stoma bag fits well there should be no smell except when changing it. If you notice a smell from your bag, do check it as there may be a leakage under the flange and your bag will need changing.

Certain foods may increase the smell of your stoma output (see pages 14-15) but this varies a lot between individuals.

Drinking buttermilk and/or eating yoghurt or parsley can help to reduce odours from colostomy and ileostomy bags. In the case of urostomates, asparagus and fish will make the urine smell when the bag is emptied.

Specialised deodorants such as Limone® are available and can be effectively added to your bag. Peppermint oil capsules have also been found to be useful inside the bag. Speak to your Stoma Care Nurse for more information.

### Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea (frequent loose watery output) can be caused by several factors, including:

- Illness
- Stress
- Diet
- Some medications (including some antibiotics and certain type 2 diabetes medication such as Metformin)

If you develop diarrhoea that you think is caused by illness, a tummy upset, food poisoning, if it is very severe or persists for more than 2 days it is important to seek medical advice from your GP.

Some individuals find that stress, especially if it is severe and ongoing, causes major problems with diarrhoea and pain. Medication may be needed to slow down bowel movement. Stress management and relaxation techniques may also be helpful in managing stress and in minimising bowel effects.

If you think the diarrhoea is due to a change of food, water or daily routine some of the following tips may help:

- Reduce the amount of high fibre foods in your diet, e.g. beans, lentils, fruit and green vegetables
- Avoid spicy food
- Keep coffee, fruit juices and alcohol to a minimum as these can increase output
- Include plain starchy foods such as rice, pasta, white bread, porridge and bananas. You can also try eating starchy marshmallows or jelly babies (approx 200g)

Remember to drink plenty of fluids even if your appetite is poor. This is particularly important if you have an ileostomy. If increasing your fluid intake further increases your stoma output seek medical advice.

## Dieting

Although unwanted weight loss is a common problem before and immediately following surgery, long-term many people find that they gain too much weight. Sensible dieting or healthy eating will not harm your stoma but it is advisable to seek medical advice before you begin. It is important to avoid crash and fad diets and never to skip meals as this may result in loose, watery output if you have an ileostomy. It is also important not to reduce your fluid intake, however, liquid only diets solely for weight management are not recommended. The best way to lose weight is by reducing your intake of sugary, fatty foods and alcohol and by increasing your exercise levels - especially walking. Aim for a slow but steady weight loss of no more than 2lbs a week.

## Nutritional advice for colostomates

Following a colostomy formation there is no need for rigid dietary restrictions, a healthy varied diet with plenty of fluid intake is encouraged. Colostomates may, however, suffer from constipation.

## Constipation

- First check that you are not taking any medications that can cause constipation including some painkillers, antidepressants as well as antidiarrhoeal drugs
- Drink plenty of fluids especially water - at least 2 litres a day (unless you've been advised otherwise - other conditions or a high stoma output might alter this advice)
- Eat regular meals and slowly increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in your diet making sure to chew food thoroughly
- Eat more porridge oats, wholemeal bread, wholegrain cereals, beans and lentils
- Try food and drinks containing root ginger and liquorice
- Exercise regularly

## Nutritional advice for ileostomates

Over time the small intestine adapts and your stoma output should thicken up (to a porridge-like consistency) and reduce to around 400-800ml (4-5 bag empties per day) so that you are able to manage a normal diet. Make sure you eat regularly as this helps to regulate stoma function. Occasionally, some people have continuing problems with stool frequency or consistency in which case you may need to take medication to control it.

## Fluid intake

In order to prevent dehydration you should try to drink 2 litres of fluid a day. Avoid or restrict alcohol as this is dehydrating. As salt losses are very high it is also important to take extra salt.

If you take part in vigorous physical exercise such as competitive sport or if the weather is very hot you will need to take extra care to drink enough fluid and to further increase your salt intake. If you have an ileostomy, isotonic drinks can be useful if taken with salty snacks such as crisps.

N.B. if your stoma output is high (more than 1 litre) or you are sweating (through exercise or hot weather) then you may need to take additional fluids that contain salt. Speak to your dietitian or GP for advice.

## Blockages

Blockage with undigested food residues can sometimes occur especially if the stoma or join is tight. A food blockage results in minimal watery or no output from the stoma. In most cases it will resolve spontaneously but if symptoms persist for longer than 12 hours or you are unable to tolerate even fluids without vomiting, you should seek medical advice. For the first few weeks following surgery, and later if you experience repeated obstructions, you may be advised to modify your fibre intake. For most ileostomates this is unnecessary and avoidance of a few foods most likely to cause blockage is sufficient to prevent problems (see pages 14-15 for more information).

## Nutritional advice for urostomates

Urostomates don't need to follow any dietary restrictions, however, you are advised to follow these simple guidelines:

- In hot weather drink plenty of fluids to prevent urine becoming concentrated as this can increase the risk of urinary tract infections
- Eat foods high in vitamins such as oranges and natural fruit juice, especially cranberry juice

Some foods and medications can change the colour and smell of urine (See page 15 for more information).

## Religious and cultural diversities

Having an ostomy may require you to make some adaptations in your life. For example, some cultural and religious practices relating to diet and nutrition may need to be considered as well as personal preferences such as being vegetarian or vegan. In all instances, you may need to experiment a little to find what works best for you. If you are unsure or need further information, please discuss with your Stoma Care Nurse or GP.

### Fasting

Remember that fasting for religious purposes is not obligatory if you are elderly, sick or if it would prove to be detrimental to your overall health. However, if you do decide to take part, here are some handy pointers for you:

- Control your output - see pages 14-15 to avoid foods that that might give you wind or make your output loose
- Drink plenty – when not fasting it is important to drink at least 2 litres of water to stay hydrated
- Avoid salt – salt can make you thirsty and feel like you are dehydrated
- Be sensible – don't over exert your energy levels and try and keep yourself at a cool temperature
- Monitor yourself – it might be worth changing your pouch more regularly during this period to check the wellbeing of your stoma (it should look the same as it does when you're not fasting)

## Travel advice

Most ostomates find that a complete pouch change just before leaving home for any long journey gives them the maximum security from possible leakage. If you have a urostomy, it may help to attach a leg bag for extra capacity. Your Stoma Care Nurse can tell you which make would be compatible with your current urostomy pouch. You may wish to consider wearing a drainable pouch when flying in order to be able to 'burp' the bag of excess wind, seek advice from your Stoma Care Nurse if you are concerned.

### Flying

The only possible problem with flying is that you tend to produce more wind due to changes in cabin pressure, but by avoiding fizzy drinks while on the journey you can help reduce the problem. Booking an aisle seat is useful as it makes it easier to get to the toilet.

### Holiday tummy and how to avoid it

A change in water, climate and food can upset anyone's bowels, whether they have a stoma or not.

It's wise to take precautions:

- Drink plenty of fluid in hot climates to replace the amount lost in sweating
- Only use bottled water for drinking and cleaning your stoma
- Avoid ice cubes and salad which may have been washed with tap water
- Highly spiced and exotic foods should be eaten with caution

## Travel advice continued

### Diarrhoea

Take an anti-diarrhoea drug (if you have an ileostomy ensure you take tablets or melts and not capsules as capsules may not be absorbed giving no benefit) and re-hydration salt sachets in case holiday tummy does strike. If you usually use a closed pouch, take some drainable pouches with you so that you don't have to keep changing your pouch when you feel under the weather. This also means you will not have the potential problem of running out of supplies in a foreign country. It's wise to take double your normal supply when you go away just in case of emergencies.

Should diarrhoea strike, don't stop drinking. If anything, try to drink as much fluid as possible to replace what's being lost. When you have diarrhoea you lose more sodium and potassium. Try to drink plenty of boiled water to replace fluids, fruit juices to replace potassium and soups or meat extract spreads to replace sodium. Adding salt to your food can help and you can also try taking re-hydration salts. If the diarrhoea continues for 2 or more days or is severe, you should seek medical attention.

## Useful numbers

### Colostomy UK

Enterprise House, 95 London Street,  
Reading, Berks, RG1 4QA  
Helpline: 0800 328 4257  
General enquires: 0118 939 1537  
Email: [info@colostomyuk.org](mailto:info@colostomyuk.org)  
Web: [www.colostomyuk.org](http://www.colostomyuk.org)

### IA – the Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group

Danehurst Court, 35 - 37 West Street,  
Rochford, Essex, SS4 1BE  
Freephone: 0800 0184724  
Web: [www.iasupport.org](http://www.iasupport.org)

### Urostomy Association

2 Tyne Place, Mickleton, Chipping  
Campden, GL55 6UG  
Telephone: 01386 430140  
Email: [info@urostomyassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@urostomyassociation.org.uk)  
Web: [urostomyassociation.org.uk](http://urostomyassociation.org.uk)

### Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment, London,  
SE1 7UQ  
Telephone: 020 7840 7840  
Web: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### Crohn's & Colitis UK

45 Grosvenor Road, St Albans, AL1 3AW  
Telephone: 0300 222 5700  
Email: [info@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](mailto:info@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk)  
Web: [www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](http://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk)

### Bowel Cancer UK

Willcox House, 140-148 Borough High  
Street, London, SE1 1LB  
Telephone: 020 7940 1760  
Email: [admin@bowelcanceruk.org.uk](mailto:admin@bowelcanceruk.org.uk)  
Web: [www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk](http://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk)

### British Nutrition Foundation

New Derwent House,  
69-73 Theobalds Road,  
London, WC1X 8TA  
Telephone: 020 7557 7930  
Email: [postbox@nutrition.org.uk](mailto:postbox@nutrition.org.uk)  
Web: [www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)



## Quick reference food and drink chart

All of the foods listed are permissible (unless you have been otherwise advised by your GP), but this is a quick reference for those which more commonly cause wind, odour, loose stools etc.

There is no need to cut out any of these foods but you may want to limit their intake on social occasions.

### Colostomy

May cause flatus	artichokes, asparagus, bananas, beans, beer, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, curry, fizzy drinks, mushrooms, radishes
May cause odour	beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, onions, parsnips, turnips
May cause loose stools	celery, chocolate, curry, figs, oil based salad dressings, peas, plums, prunes, rhubarb, spinach, sweetcorn
Requires chewing well	nuts

### Ileostomy

May cause flatus	bananas, beans, beer, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, curry, eggs, fizzy drinks, *mushrooms, onions, radishes, *sweetcorn
May cause odour	beans, broccoli, cauliflower, cheese, cucumber, eggs, fish, onions, parsnips, seafood, turnips
May cause loose stools	apples, apricots, beans, cabbage, cereals, chocolate, *coconut, curry, figs, gooseberries, grapes, kiwi, lettuce, mango, oil based salad dressings, oranges, onions, peaches, peas, pears, *pineapple, plums, popcorn, porridge, prunes, raspberries, rhubarb, spinach, strawberries, *sweetcorn, tomatoes
Requires chewing well	beef, bamboo shoots, *celery, *coconut, *coleslaw, *dried fruit, grapes, lamb, *mushrooms, *nuts, *pineapple, popcorn, potatoes, raspberries, *sweetcorn

*\*May cause blockages if eaten in quantity*

### Urostomy

May cause odour	asparagus, fish, garlic, seafood, onion
May discolour urine	beetroot



# SecuriCare Home Delivery Service

Freephone Orderline

**0800 318 965**

Email: [info@securicaremedical.co.uk](mailto:info@securicaremedical.co.uk)

[www.securicaremedical.co.uk](http://www.securicaremedical.co.uk)

 [facebook.com/securicare](https://facebook.com/securicare)

 [@onestopstoma](https://twitter.com/onestopstoma) [@1stopcontinence](https://twitter.com/1stopcontinence)

 [clinimed\\_securecare](https://www.instagram.com/clinimed_securecare)