

# Information for patients and carers

## Dietary advice for patients with a new ileostomy

RPH Stoma Care Team

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A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue color, transitioning from a light blue at the top to a dark blue at the bottom.

With your new ileostomy, you will need to eat an easily digestible diet. As your large bowel is no longer in use, your body will be absorbing less water and salt. It should adapt in time, but to help it, please follow the dietary advice in this leaflet.

This leaflet is standardised advice, however, please remember that different individuals respond differently to foods. So please judge with your own personal tolerance in mind.

## Starting to eat after your operation

To help you heal after surgery, eat a balanced diet where possible. It may take a while for your appetite to return, so try to be patient and do not put too much pressure on yourself.

Start off with small portions of soft and easily digestible protein rich foods, meat, eggs, fish, cheese and milk. These will help with wound healing. Low fibre food is typically stodgy and easy to digest. Low fibre carbohydrates are things such as white bread, pasta, rice, Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, crisps, biscuits and potatoes without skins are also an important part of your diet.

To help with poor appetite, eat smaller and more frequent meals. Snack between meals, cheese and crackers, biscuits, yoghurts, sandwiches, or any other nutritional supplements prescribed for you. Chewing your food well is also very important in aiding digestion.

Your bowel will take 6-8 weeks to settle down and it is normal to see changes in your ileostomy output which will be runnier in the morning after your first drink and will then start to thicken after this. If your output remains consistently watery after you have tried to thicken it with diet, please contact your GP or stoma nurse.

The aim is to have a porridge consistency output. If you do eat something that increases your output or makes it very watery, then it is best to avoid this food for a few weeks. Your digestive system may not be the same as it was before your surgery.

## Are there any foods that I should avoid?

These foods are high in fibre and if eaten in large quantities, they may cause an ileostomy blockage. Please avoid these foods where possible:

- Nuts
- Coconut
- Celery
- Mushrooms
- Sweetcorn
- Raw fruit skins
- Beansprouts and bamboo shoots
- Dried fruit such as currents and raisins
- Pith, pips and stones
- Popcorn

## What should I do if I get a blockage?

If your ileostomy stops working, continue drinking fluids but stop eating. Try to rest and massage your abdomen in a soothing manor. Continue to repeat this process every hour.

**If your ileostomy does not work for 6 hours or you begin to vomit, please seek medical advice via your GP or 111.**

## What should I do if my stoma output increases or becomes looser?

Certain foods may make your ileostomy output looser, especially if eaten in big quantities. Try reducing your fibre and caffeine intake and see if this helps. Add an extra pinch of salt on your food or eat a small amount of salt rich foods, this will help you to retain more water.

It may be helpful to keep a food diary.

Spicy food can make your output looser. In the first 6-8 weeks after your operation, try to avoid heavily spiced food. When you are ready to re-introduce spice, do it slowly and monitor how this affects your stoma.

Another way you can help is by maintaining a fluid intake of around 2 litres per day. It is important you do not try and replace lost fluids with oral fluid, as this will only increase your output. You can make an oral rehydration solution, such as St Marks – you can discuss this with your stoma care nurse.

## Drinks

Avoid any pure fruit juices as they are high in fibre and will result in a watery increased stoma output. When drinking fizzy drinks, it is best to let them go a little flat to avoid excess gas.

Drinking alcohol can lead to dehydration in ileostomy patients. Alcohol is best avoided, so please consider this carefully before doing so.

## Fluid intake

You may have loose output for the first few weeks, so it is important to keep your fluids and salts up.

Aim to drink around 2L of fluid per day.

## Signs of dehydration

Dry mouth, feeling thirsty, dizzy/lightheaded, tired, headache, passing less urine/dark urine and muscle cramps. If you have these symptoms, then have a think about your stoma output. If you feel dehydrated, then try the advice in this leaflet and seek medical advice where you feel necessary.

Your urine is a very good indicator of your hydration. If your urine is dark and the amount is less than normal, then this suggests that you may be dehydrated. A pale yellow is the ideal colour.

**If you are worried contact your GP, stoma nurse or 111.**

## Royal Preston stoma nurses

We are available on telephone: **01772 522371** 08:00 – 16:00 Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays. If you have any worries. If the phone isn't answered, then please listen to the recorded message, and then leave your name, contact details and a brief description of your query.

Alternatively, you can contact your community stoma nurse.

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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

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

[www.iasupport.org](http://www.iasupport.org)

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[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.**

**This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

**Department:** Stoma Care/Colorectal

**Division:** Surgery

**Production date:** April 2024

**Review date:** April 2027

**JR 1126 v1**