

Information for patients and carers

Post-operative advice for patients with a new ileostomy

Stoma Care Team

01772 522371

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

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 each person will 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. The aim is for you to be able to return to a healthy and balanced diet as soon as feasible. 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, such as 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, such as white bread, pasta, rice, Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, crisps, biscuits and potatoes without skins, are also an important part of your diet.

When introducing fruit and vegetables back into your diet, it is advisable to start off by eating small portions of well-cooked vegetables and skin/pith free fruit (excluding those in the section on the next page that are known to increase the risk of blockages). Fruit and vegetables are an important part of a balanced diet and a source of nutrients, which are involved with healing and recovery.

To help with poor appetite, eat smaller and more frequent meals. Snacking between meals is a good idea. This may include foods such as 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 should 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 manner. Continue to repeat this process every hour.

If your ileostomy does not work for 12 hours or you begin to vomit, please seek medical advice via your GP or 111 (NHS UK).

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

Certain foods may make your ileostomy output looser, especially if eaten in large 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 output.

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 from your ileostomy with oral fluids, as this will only increase your output. You can make an oral rehydration solution, such as St Mark's – you can discuss this with your stoma care nurse.

Fluid intake

Pure fruit juices are high in natural sugar and may result in a watery and increased stoma output. It is advisable to only drink small amounts of pure fruit juice and to dilute it with water.

When drinking fizzy drinks, it is best to let them go a little flat to avoid excess gas building up.

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

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

Signs of dehydration

- Dry mouth
- Feeling thirsty
- Dizzy/lightheaded
- Tired
- Headache
- Passing less/dark urine
- Muscle cramps

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 have any of these symptoms, then have a think about your stoma output. If your stoma output is looser or higher than normal, then you may be dehydrated. If you think you are dehydrated, then try the advice in this leaflet and seek medical advice where you feel necessary.

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

Royal Preston stoma nurses

We are available via telephone **01772 522371** 08:00 – 16:00 Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

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.

Further dietary advice

If you feel that you need more dietary advice or that you are not able to meet your nutritional needs, please contact your stoma nurse or GP, who can refer you to a dietician if appropriate.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.iasupport.org

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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.

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