

Dietary advice on how to reduce the fibre in your diet

Information for
patients



This diet should only be followed with the guidance of your doctor or dietitian.

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables, which are not digested and passes down the gut to form part of a bowel movement (stool).

It is made up of soluble and insoluble fibre.

Soluble fibre

Soluble fibre is broken down by bacteria in the gut to produce energy, gas and bulky stools.

Foods high in soluble fibre include:

- barley;
- fruit;
- oats;
- pulses;
- seeds; and
- vegetables.

Insoluble fibre

Insoluble fibre passes through the gut in an undigested form. It draws water into the bowel (like a sponge) to make stools softer and more bulky.

Foods high in insoluble fibre include:

- edible skins and seeds of soft fruit and vegetables e.g. grapes, strawberries and jacket potato skin;
- nuts; and
- wholegrains e.g. wholegrain cereals and breads such as All Bran, bran flakes, fruit and fibre and multi-seeded bread.

Why do I need to reduce the fibre in my diet?

A diet low in soluble and insoluble fibre can help to reduce the bulk of your stool and the number of bowel movements per day. A low fibre diet may be advised to help a number of different bowel symptoms or conditions such as:

- bloating and stomach / abdominal discomfort;
- partial bowel obstruction (sub-acute bowel obstruction);
- before / after bowel operations;
- acute inflammation of diverticular disease, relapse of Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis; and
- chronic radiation enteritis.

The following table lists common foods that are lower in fibre to include in your diet and those that are higher in fibre to avoid.

	Low Fibre Foods to Choose	High Fibre Foods to Avoid
Flour and bread	White bread and foods made with white flour or cornflour e.g. chapatti, crumpets, English muffins, plain scones, pancakes, pastry, pitta, plain bagels, plain naan bread, poppadoms, wraps and Yorkshire pudding	Brown, granary, Hi Bran, rye, wholegrain, wholemeal varieties of bread, flours and pastries. Fruit and nut bread and pastries, seeded breads. Oats, oatmeal and barley
Breakfast cereals	Coco Pops, Cornflakes, Frosties, Rice Krispies, and Special K	All Bran, Branflakes, fruit and fibre, muesli, porridge, puffed wheat, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies, Sugar Puffs, Weetabix and cereal bars

	Low Fibre Foods to Choose	High Fibre Foods to Avoid
Rice, pasta and grains	Plain couscous. White noodles, pasta and rice. Polenta, tapioca and semolina	Brown and wild rice. Bulgar wheat. Wholewheat pasta and noodles Quinoa
Potatoes	All peeled and cooked potatoes e.g. mashed, boiled or inside of a jacket potato. Yams	Sweet potato and skins of any potato
Pulses (beans, lentils, peas), nuts and seeds	Mushy peas. Hummus (1 portion = 50 g, plain). Well blended lentil soup. Smooth nut butters e.g. peanut / cashew butter	All types of beans e.g. baked beans, butter beans, kidney beans and soy bean. Chickpeas, garden peas. Lentils e.g. green, red, and Puy. All nuts including whole nut seeds e.g. pumpkin, sesame and sunflower

	Low Fibre Foods to Choose	High Fibre Foods to Avoid
Non-meat alternatives	Eggs, tofu, seitan, soya bean and pea protein powder	Quorn, soya mince
Biscuits and cakes	Sweet or savoury biscuits and cakes made with white flour e.g. butter puffs, cream crackers, morning coffee, rich tea, shortbread, water biscuits. Madeira cake and plain sponge cake, muffins and scones	Biscuits and cakes containing fruit or nuts and wholemeal varieties e.g. crispbreads, digestives, fig rolls, flapjack, fruit cake, fruit scones, malt loaf, mince pies, muffins and oatcakes
Dairy and Alternatives	Yoghurt without fruit pieces, nuts, pips or seeds. Butter, cheese, cream, crème fraîche, custard, eggs, ice cream, margarine, milk, milk puddings, mousse and sour cream. Soya and dairy alternatives as above e.g. coconut / soya milk	Any cheese, yoghurts, milk or alternative product containing cereals, fruit pieces, nuts, pips or seeds

	Low Fibre Foods to Choose	High Fibre Foods to Avoid
Sweets and preserves	Seedless jams and marmalade without peel. Honey, lemon curd, sugar and syrup, clear jelly. Boiled sweets, jelly sweets, marshmallows and mints. Chocolate, fudge and toffee without nuts or fruit	Jams and marmalades containing peel or seeds. Chutney, marzipan, pickles, sweet mincemeat. Chocolate with dried fruit, nuts or seeds
Miscellaneous	Pepper, salt, spices and dry herbs. Bovril, instant gravy, Marmite, soy sauce and vinegar. Clear / creamed / canned smooth soups without vegetables. Brown and tomato sauce, mayonnaise, salad cream and smooth mustard. Reconstituted potato snacks e.g. Pringles, Hula Hoops, French Fries and Quavers	Soups containing vegetables, chunky vegetables or pearl barley. Wholegrain mustard. Popcorn. Olives. Fresh herbs

Fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables often contain a lot of fibre. Keeping these to a minimum can help to reduce your symptoms.

Fibre is often contained in the skins, seeds, pips, stalks and stones of fruits and vegetables. Try to remove as much of these as possible. Well cooked (cooked until soft, try to avoid raw) and finely chopped fruits and vegetables are often better tolerated.

Please note potatoes are not counted as a vegetable.

A portion of fruit is:

- 2 or more small fruits e.g. 2 plums or 2 satsumas (with skin removed);
- 1 medium size fruit e.g. 1 peeled apple or 1 banana; and
- 1 piece of large fruit e.g. 5 cm slice of melon or ½ grapefruit.

A portion of vegetables is:

- 3 heaped tablespoons of cooked vegetables e.g. cauliflower, beetroot or swede.

The following table lists fruits and vegetables that are lower in fibre to include in your diet and those that are higher in fibre to avoid.

	Low Fibre Foods to Choose	High Fibre Foods to Avoid
Fruit	Any of the below that are cooked, stewed, tinned or ripe, and without skin or seeds: Apple, apricots, banana, grapefruit, mandarin, melon, nectarine, oranges, peach, pear, pineapple, plums, satsumas and tangerines. Smooth fruit juice or smoothies	All fruit skins, stalks, seeds and stones. All dried fruit. Berries, cherries, dates, figs, grapes, gooseberries, kiwi, mango, pomegranate, prunes and rhubarb
Vegetables	Any of the below that are cooked, and without skin or seeds: Asparagus, beetroot, carrots, cauliflower, courgette, cucumber, marrow, peppers, pumpkin and swede. Tomatoes without skins and deseeded such as passata and tomato puree	All vegetable skins, seeds or stalks. Broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, celery, coleslaw, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, okra, olives, parsnips, peas, plantain and spinach. Sweetcorn

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is contained in fruit and vegetables and is used by the body for growth and repair. To ensure you have enough vitamin C in your diet, aim to have one of the following in addition to your two portions of fruits and vegetables per day:

- 1 glass (150 ml) of smooth fruit juice (no bits) or
- 1 glass (150 ml) of vitamin C enriched fruit drink.

Are there any other changes to my diet that may help?

In addition to following a low fibre diet, the following dietary changes may help manage your symptoms:

- eat smaller meals, more frequently throughout the day;
- chew all food well. If a food cannot be thoroughly chewed, it should be avoided or a softer alternative chosen;
- cook your food until soft as this can sometimes make it easier to chew;
- avoid any food that is tough and / or stringy e.g. tough, gristly meat; and
- avoid gas forming foods such as fizzy drinks and chewing gum.

The following foods do not contain any fibre and can be included freely as part of a healthy balanced diet:

- milk and milk alternatives;
- dairy foods (without fruit or nuts);

- **tender** meat, fish and poultry;
- fats, oils and sugar;
- drinks e.g. tea, coffee, squash, milk, malted drinks, hot chocolate, prescribed supplement drinks; and
- spices, vinegar and flavourings.

Suggested Meal plan

You can use the below meal suggestions for ideas.

Breakfast

Glass of smooth fruit juice.

White bread or toast with spread and seedless jam or honey or eggs.

Cornflakes / Rice Krispies with milk.

Lunch

Tender meat / fish / chicken / egg / cheese.

Mashed potatoes / boiled potatoes / white rice / pasta.

Portion of vegetables (see allowed list).

Milk pudding / plain sponge and custard.

Evening Meal

Sandwich (white bread) with meat / chicken / fish / cheese / egg

or

Omelette with cheese and ham

or

Soup e.g. chicken or oxtail, with bread and butter.

Portion of fruit (see allowed list) / jelly / ice cream / yoghurt / mousse.

Snack suggestions:

Shortcake biscuit.

Cheese and crackers e.g. cream cracker.

Madeira cake / plain sponge cake / plain scone and butter.

Crumpets with butter.

Packet of crisps.

Smooth yoghurt / mousse.

Drinks such as water, tea, coffee, fruit squash, milk and malted drinks e.g. Horlicks or Ovaltine can be taken freely through the day as desired, unless otherwise advised by your care team.

How long should I follow a low fibre diet?

A low fibre diet should be followed for as long as your symptoms last or as advised by your doctor or care team.

If your doctor or care team are happy for you to reintroduce fibre into your diet, higher fibre foods should be gradually re-introduced one by one, over a period of time and in small amounts. If you find any particular food causes discomfort or makes your symptoms worse, restart your low fibre diet and contact your doctor or care team.

Food	Add
Breakfast cereals	Cream. Evaporated or condensed milk. Full-fat milk or yoghurt. Honey, sugar or syrup
Vegetables and mashed potatoes	Butter or margarine. Creamy cheese or white sauce. Double cream. Grated or cream cheese. Olive oil
Soups	Double cream. Dried milk powder. Full-fat milk. Grated or cream cheese
Savoury dishes e.g. scrambled egg	Butter or margarine. Double cream. Grated cheese. Mayonnaise

Food	Add
Milk based sauces	Double cream. Dried milk powder. Full-fat natural yoghurt. Grated or cream cheese
Puddings	Custard. Double cream. Evaporated or condensed milk. Honey. Ice cream. Syrup

Where possible choose full-fat products.

Practical tips for a small appetite

- Try smaller, more frequent meals / snacks every few hours.
- Take fluids after a meal rather than just before as they may fill you up.
- Relax before meal times and take your time while eating, remembering to chew thoroughly.
- Try and get some fresh air before meal times to help stimulate your appetite.
- If you are tired, you may enjoy food prepared by someone else.

- In order to save time and energy, food can be cooked in larger amounts and then frozen.
- Ready meals that are frozen, chilled or tinned take less effort to prepare (choose variety based on the low fibre guidance above).

Nourishing drinks and snacks

As well as enriching your food, having nourishing drinks and snacks can also be useful to increase your energy intake if you have lost weight. Here are some suggestions:

- hot milky drinks e.g. Horlicks, Ovaltine, hot chocolate, milky coffee;
- full-fat milk or cold milkshakes with added ice cream or flavouring e.g. Nesquik powder or Crusha syrup;
- instant smooth soups without vegetable pieces made with milk instead of water;
- biscuits soaked in milk, tea or coffee, e.g. rich tea biscuits;
- chocolate (without nuts or fruit); and
- breakfast cereal with full-fat milk (see allowed list of breakfast cereals).

Chemists and supermarkets sell supplemented milkshakes or soups such as Complan or Meritene. These drinks can be used in-between meals or at bedtime. They are available in a variety of sweet and savoury flavours and can be made up with milk. Nutritional supplement drinks are also available on prescription. Ask your dietitian or doctor for more information.

Diabetes

Fibre can be used to help control blood glucose levels in people with type 2 diabetes. If you are reducing the amount of fibre in your diet, adjustment of diabetes medication and regular blood glucose monitoring may be needed to help achieve this.

Contact your nurse, doctor or dietitian for further advice, especially if you take tablets (such as gliclazide) or insulin to control your blood glucose levels.

If you have any queries please contact:

Dietitian	<input type="text"/>
Contact Number	<input type="text"/>

Other useful contacts

Crohn's and Colitis UK

Telephone: **0300 222 5700**

Website: www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

Cancer Research UK

Telephone: **0808 800 4040**

Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Macmillan

Telephone: **0808 808 0000**

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk



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