

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

4-step bowel obstruction diet

The information in this advice sheet is for patients who:

- Have been diagnosed with a bowel obstruction related to cancer.
- Have a mass in the small or large intestine (bowel) and are at risk of a blockage.

You will have been referred to the oncology dietitian to discuss this further.

Symptoms that could be a sign your bowel may be blocked include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abdominal (tummy) pain.• Vomiting.• Feeling full quickly.• 'Tightness' across your stomach• Nausea (feeling sick). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bowels not opened or passed wind for more than two days.• Bloating/abdominal (tummy) swelling.• Feeling full after drinking. |
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Background

Some foods are more difficult for the body to break down. When they pass through the digestive system without being broken down properly, they can risk getting caught in a narrowing of the bowel.

Reintroducing oral intake following a period of obstruction is a gradual process and people progress onto different levels depending on their obstruction and symptoms. There are four stages for reintroducing diet. How long you are on each stage will be dependent on your symptoms. You may move back and forwards between stages.

The 4 steps

Stage 1
Clear fluids

Stage 2
Liquid diet

Stage 3
Soft/ pureed diet

Stage 4
Soft low fibre diet

Stage 1 – clear liquids

After a complete blockage when you start to pass wind again and your symptoms settle, you will be encouraged to start sipping on clear liquids only.

Types	Options
Sweet	Water, coconut water, black tea/ black coffee, herbal tea, fruit tea, squash, smooth/ clear fruit juice, flavoured water (Oasis®, Rubicon® (still), Vimto®), still isotonic sports drinks (Lucozade®, Powerade®). You may also suck on boiled sweets and mints (ensuring they are not chewed or swallowed in pieces).
Savoury	Clear miso soup, hot cup of water with marmite®, a stock cube or Bovril®, clear consommé soup (no bits).

It is not possible to meet your nutritional needs on clear liquids. Your dietitian will prescribe appropriate juice-based nutritional supplements.

Stage 2 – liquid diet

Once your bowels have started opening regularly and your symptoms from bowel obstruction have settled, you will be able to move to the next stage of liquid diet which means all types of liquids that are completely smooth and thin (no thicker than whole milk).

To achieve the appropriate consistency, a liquidiser/ handheld blender can be used alongside a sieve for straining.

To add additional calories and protein to your liquid diet, use full fat milk (dairy or dairy free alternative), add skimmed-milk powder, or add cream into thin milkshakes.

Aim to follow a little and often approach.

You can also suck on boiled sweets (not chewed or swallowed in pieces), mints, ice lollies or melt in the mouth smooth chocolate or crisps for flavour.

Mealtimes	Options
Breakfast	Blended porridge with warm milk, thin milkshake, smooth/ thin smoothie.
Main meals	Smooth homemade soups e.g. chicken, oxtail, sweet potato or butternut squash, powdered soups.
Snacks	Hot chocolate, Horlicks®, Ovaltine®, milky coffees/ tea, smooth ice cream, homemade milkshakes with milk/plant-based alternatives, milkshakes such as Frijj®, Yop®, Yazoo®, thin custard, ice cream, frozen yogurt, sorbet, jelly.

It is not possible to meet your nutritional needs on liquid diet. Your dietitian will prescribe appropriate nutritional supplements – this can now include milk-based options.

Stage 3 - smooth/ puréed diet

If your bowels are opening regularly and symptoms have settled after several days on stage 2, you can move onto stage 3.

All foods should be a smooth consistency with no lumps. These foods should not have to be chewed due to their consistency. To achieve the appropriate consistency a liquidiser/handheld blender can be used alongside a sieve for straining. The food should fall off the spoon easily.

When blending the food, a meal can look more appetising if you keep the food groups separate (you could use moulds). Also include cream, cheese, skimmed milk powder, full-fat milk, stock, gravy, or sauce to fortify the meal with calories and keep it creamy.

Avoid the 'roughage' on fruits and vegetables or gristly meats as these are more difficult to blend to a smooth consistency.

Aim to eat small portions but more regularly such as 5 or 6 small meals across the day.

Mealtimes	Options
Breakfast	'Soggy/ blended' cereal, Ready Brek® with milk, Weetabix®, pureed/ stewed fruit, smooth scrambled eggs, milkshake, smooth smoothie.
Main meals	Puréed meats and gravy, puréed fish with sauce, puréed stew, Mashed potatoes with butter, the inside only of a jacket potato, puréed egg mayonnaise, cream cheese, smooth pâté, smooth soup, avocado. Try adding garlic or chilli-infused oil when cooking at add in flavour.
Pudding:	Custard, rice pudding, semolina, tapioca, mousse, Angel Delight®, crème caramel, milk free alternative puddings, sponge cake blended with ice cream or custard, yogurts, ice creams, biscuits dunked in a hot drink, smooth nut butters, smooth hazelnut spread.
Melt-in-the-mouth options	Wotsits®, Skips®, Quavers®, Pom Bears®, Walkers®, crackers, smooth chocolate.

Stage 4 - soft low fibre diet

If your bowels continue to open regularly and you are not having any associated symptoms, you can move onto stage 4.

Having a lower-fibre diet may impact your bowel habits, please speak to your medical team about starting laxatives as appropriate.

General rules to follow for a soft low-fibre diet for bowel obstructions:

- Avoid all bread/bread products including crumpets, muffins, and doughnuts. This is due to the doughy texture which swells and forms a ball which could block a narrow space increasing risk of obstruction.
- Ensure food is prepared soft, moist, and sloppy for example adding extra sauce, butter, cream, custard and cooking well.
- Chew food well and take your time eating.
- Choose a little and often approach to eating, for example small meals/snacks throughout the day, not overloading with a large meal all at once.
- Avoid the 'roughage' on fruits and vegetables meaning the skin or large pips.
- Avoid beans/pulses.
- Avoid gristly meats.
- At the start, aim to have only 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables per day only and increase if tolerated.

The following information gives guidance of what foods are suitable for a soft low-fibre diet. Foods are split into the main food groups and are separated into columns as the key shows.

Stage 4	Foods to include	Foods to avoid
Meats, fish, eggs, and others	All types of plain meat or poultry (select lean cuts without gristle and add extra sauce) e.g. pork medallions, trimmed back bacon, chicken breast, lean lamb/beef, minced meat, chicken or turkey, sliced meats. Smooth meat paste/pâté. Tofu. Eggs. Plain fish with bones removed e.g. fresh, frozen, or tinned. Fish paste/ pâté. Ensure prawns are peeled and chewed well. Soft well-cooked beans and lentils without skins e.g. lentil soup, yellow split peas, marrowfat peas. Completely smooth puréed beans, lentils, or hummus (with no skins).	Gristly meats, fatty lower quality minced meats (particularly lamb and beef) and ribs. Fish that contains edible bones such as whitebait, tinned mackerel. Fish skin. Pulses with coarse skins or firm beans e.g. kidney beans, baked beans, chickpeas, soybeans, haricot beans or borlotti beans. Nuts and crunchy nut butters. Quorn and soya beans.
Dairy	Milk and non-dairy alternatives. Hard or soft cheeses without nuts, onion, or dried fruits (chewed well).	Yogurts or cheeses which contain dried fruit, nuts, or seeds.

	Smooth yogurts, fromage frais or natural/ Greek style (without nuts, muesli), frozen yogurt. Ice cream (without nuts or dried fruit), custard, ground rice pudding, semolina, tapioca, blancmange, mousse, Angel Delight®, sorbet.	Ice cream containing fruit with pips and skins and/or nuts.
Cereals, rice, bread, pasta, grains, and potatoes	Breakfast cereals soaked well in milk to a soggy consistency such as Rice Krispies®, Ricles®, Coco Pops®, Ready Brek®, Cornflakes®. Soft, well-cooked grains, e.g. white rice, plain couscous, polenta, tapioca. All potato types, without skins, chewed well with additional sauce such as mashed potato, potato waffles, fried potatoes (soft.) Biscuits dunked in hot drinks. Crackers, crisp breads, melt on the tongue crisps, breadsticks, Cornish wafers, Ritz® crackers, Tuc® crackers. Soft cakes with custard.	All bread products including doughnuts, muffins, crumpets, pita breads, croissants, pancakes, brioche. Breakfast cereals with added dried fruits and/or nuts e.g. muesli, granola, Fruit'n Fibre®, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes®. Wholemeal/ wholegrain and bran cereals e.g. All Bran®, Branflakes®, Weetabix®, Special K®. Rolled oats and porridge. Wholegrain or seeded crackers, crispbreads, oat cakes, corn cakes. Barley, pearl barley, spelt, quinoa, bulgar wheat, farro, freekeh, amaranth.
Biscuits and cakes	Madeleines, madeira cake, angel slices, mini chocolate rolls, lemon slices, apple pie softened with custard, cream, custard, ice cream. Rich tea, malted milk, custard cream (dunked).	Cakes or biscuits with dried fruits and nut, fig rolls, Garibaldi®. Wholegrain biscuits, Hobnobs®. Hot cross buns, tea cakes, fruit scones.
Fruits to have in moderation	Apples (peeled), apricots (fresh, peeled), bananas, mango, melon, nectarines (peeled), papaya, pears (peeled), peaches (peeled), plums (peeled), watermelon (no pips). Tinned or stewed fruit, fruit compote, fresh fruit juice (no bits).	Blackberries, blackcurrants, blueberries, cherries, clementines, coconut, cranberries (fresh/dried), dates, dried apricots, figs, grapefruit, grapes, kiwi, mandarins, oranges, passionfruit, pineapple, pomegranate, prunes, raisins, raspberries, redcurrants, rhubarb, satsumas, strawberries, sultanas.

Vegetables to have in moderation	All vegetables need to be well cooked. Aubergine (peeled and deseeded), avocado, broccoli (no stalks), butternut squash, cabbage (white or green), carrots, cauliflower (no stalks), celeriac, chilli puree, courgette peeled, cucumber (peeled and deseeded), daikon (Asian radish), garlic puree, gem squash, ginger puree, horseradish puree, lemongrass puree, marrow (peeled), onion (well-cooked as a paste), parsnips, patty pan (peeled), peppers (peeled and deseeded), pumpkin, shallots (well-cooked as a paste), spinach (well-cooked) swede, tomato passata, tomatoes (peeled and deseeded) turnips, smooth vegetable soups.	All skins, pips, and seeds. Tough stalks of vegetables e.g. cauliflower, broccoli. Raw vegetables. Soup with whole vegetables e.g. minestrone, asparagus, baby corn, bean sprouts. Beetroot, bok choy, broad beans, brussels sprouts, celery, chicory, chilli (fresh), coleslaw, edamame, fennel, French beans, garlic (whole, raw and undercooked), gherkins, ginger, globe artichokes, green beans, Jerusalem artichokes, kohlrabi, leeks, lemongrass, lettuce, mangetout, mushrooms, okra, olives, onion (whole, raw or undercooked), pak choy, peas, pickled onions, radishes, rocket, runner beans, salad leaves, shallots (whole, raw and undercooked), soya beans, spinach (raw), spring greens, spring onions, sugar snap peas, sweetcorn.
Others	Lemon curd, smooth marmalade, seedless jam, honey, syrup yeast extract, Bovril®, stock cubes. Salt, pepper, tomato puree, vinegar, herbs and spices, pesto that doesn't contain nuts (e.g. roasted red pepper pesto), ketchup, mustard. Smooth nut butters in moderation - almond, peanut, cashew butters, Nutella®, or chocolate spread. Fudge, smooth white or plain chocolate, jelly.	Whole fruit jams/conserves/ marmalade with shreds or seeds/skins. Pickles and chutney, crunchy vegetable-based dips. Tropical or Bombay mix. Fruit and/or nut mixes, sweets with fruit and nuts e.g. peanut brittle, yogurt or chocolate covered nuts/fruit. Popcorn Toffee, jelly sweets, nougat, marshmallows.

Contact details

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Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns, or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

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