
Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Low fibre diet for bowel conditions

Indications for a low fibre diet

You may be asked to follow a low fibre diet for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to:

- before/ after bowel surgery (temporary)
- after the insertion of a colonic stent
- if you are at risk of a bowel obstruction/ blockage
- during an active flare up of ulcerative colitis
- Crohn's disease or diverticulitis
- if you are suffering from diarrhoea, have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or if you have a high output ileostomy/ colostomy

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of plants that you eat but which doesn't get digested in your small intestine. Instead, it is completely or partially broken down (fermented) by bacteria in your large intestine.

Fibre can affect individuals differently. Some people find that too much fibre in the diet can aggravate diarrhoea, constipation, bloating, flatulence and abdominal pain.

Certain types of dietary fibre may be more difficult for your gut to break down. This fibre is mostly found in foods that contains skins, strings, pips and seeds.

It is common that a low fibre diet will be recommended for a short period. Try following a low fibre diet for an initial period of **four weeks**. Your doctor or dietitian may recommend you follow this for longer.

After the trial period of four weeks, you may find that you can gradually reintroduce fibre back into your diet to an amount you can tolerate. Guidance on how to reintroduce fibre gradually is given within this diet sheet.

You may experience constipation while adhering to a low fibre diet. To help with this, you may need to include a non-fermentable bulking agent (NFBA) in your diet, such as ground/ milled linseed/ flaxseed, Normacol, Celevac and psyllium husk. NFBAs are natural sources of fibre which can help to regulate bowel movements by softening and increasing the bulk of stools. They are **not** fermented by the bacteria in your gut and therefore do not cause symptoms often caused by eating fibre. These should be taken with plenty of fluid.

It is important that you have an adequate fluid intake while following a low fibre diet. You should aim to have at least 8 to 10 cups of fluid daily.

Low fibre versus higher fibre foods

LOW FIBRE (SUITABLE)	HIGHER FIBRE (UNSUITABLE)
Protein	
All types of fish, meat and meat products ie fresh, frozen, tinned (soft, tender, not charred with visible fat and skins removed) Smooth paté or liver sausage Eggs Tofu Quorn Soya mince	Skin and bones of fish Meat or fish made with wholemeal pastry or breadcrumbs
Dairy products	
Milk – all types eg cow’s, goat’s, sheep’s, soya, rice and oat. Cheese – without pieces of fruit or nuts Smooth yoghurts – natural or fruit flavoured Cream Smooth ice cream and sorbet	Cheese with pieces of fruit or nuts Yoghurt with pieces of fruit, nuts, seeds or pips Ice cream containing nuts, fruit or seeds
Carbohydrates	
White flour and baked products made with white flour eg white bread, crumpets, pastry, chappati and poppadoms White rice*, couscous, tapioca, sago, cornflour White pasta*, spaghetti*, macaroni*, noodles* Cereals eg Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, Coco Pops, Frosties, Cheerios. Special K Plain biscuits eg Rich Tea, shortbread, Custard Creams, chocolate chip cookies, malted milk biscuits. Plain cake eg chocolate, Madeira, Victoria sponge Plain oat cakes, crackers, rice cakes, corn cakes Crisps, tortilla chips, cheese straws, plain bread sticks and all other plain crispbreads and crackers	Wholemeal, brown, granary, bran and soya flours and breads. High fibre white breads. Wholemeal rice, cold rice; wholemeal pasta, spaghetti, cold pasta and spaghetti Wholegrain cereals eg Weetabix, All-Bran, porridge, muesli and any cereal with added nuts or fruit Wholemeal biscuits eg digestives, flapjacks, Hobnobs Biscuits containing nuts or dried fruit eg fig rolls, Garibaldi Cakes with dried fruits or nuts, hot cross buns Cereal bars with dried fruit or nuts Rye and whole grain crispbreads or crackers Oatcakes

*Rice, pasta and potato should be eaten whilst still hot. When cooled, these foods become more resistant to digestion, effectively increasing their fibre content.

LOW FIBRE (SUITABLE)		HIGHER FIBRE (UNSUITABLE)	
Fruit			
Where possible, avoid skins and seeds. Keep to a maximum of two portions a day. Try to spread fruit throughout the day.			
Apples Apricot Cherries Fruit cocktail Grapefruit Grapes Kiwi Lychees Mango Nectarine Oranges Peaches Pears Rhubarb Pineapple Satsumas Strawberries Tangerines Puréed, stewed or cooked fruit (without skins, pips or stones)		Dried fruit Banana Banana chips Blackberries Cranberries Currants Dates Figs Gooseberries Coconut Prunes Loganberries Raisins Raspberries Redcurrants Sultanas	
Vegetable			
Where possible, avoid skins, seeds and stalks. Keep to a maximum of two portions a day. Try to spread vegetable throughout the day.			
Low fibre (suitable)	Medium fibre (have small portions occasionally)	High fibre (to reintroduce gradually)	
Asparagus Aubergine Beetroot Carrot Celery Courgette Cucumber Leeks Lettuce Marrow Mushrooms Onion Pepper Potato* Radish Swede Tomato	Avocado Beansprouts Green/ french/ runner beans Broccoli florets Cabbage Cauliflower florets Mangetout Parsnips Spinach Spring greens Sweet potato*	Pulse-type beans, such as baked, broad, butter, kidney Brussels sprouts Chickpeas Lentils Peas Sweetcorn	

It is recommended not to exceed **four** portions of fruit/ vegetables daily and try to spread throughout the day.

LOW FIBRE (SUITABLE)	HIGHER FIBRE (UNSUITABLE)
Puddings	
Ice cream, lollies, sorbets, jelly, milk puddings, rice pudding, custard, blancmange	Any puddings containing fruits or nuts Crumbles and other puddings made with high fibre biscuits or flours
Drinks	
Water, squashes, fruit juices Tea, coffee Cocoa, Ovaltine Fizzy drinks (these are low in fibre but they may increase wind and bloating) Fruit and vegetable smoothies made with fruits and vegetables from the low fibre list and within the daily allowance.	Fruit juice with bits Fruit and vegetable smoothies or milk made with fruits and vegetables from the high fibre list
Miscellaneous	
Honey, syrup, lemon curd Smooth jam, marmalade without pips/ seeds Marmite, Bovril Corn, maize and rice based snacks (for example prawn crackers, rice cakes, cheese puffs, Rice Krispies cakes, cornflake cakes Pretzels Boiled sweets, chocolate, toffee Seasoning, spices Soups, stock cubes	Marmalade or jam with bits/ peel Peanut butter Nuts, seeds Tropical and Bombay mix Potato crisps* Wholemeal/ wholegrain savoury snacks Cereal bars made with oats, dried fruit or nuts Confectionery containing fruit and nuts Pickles and chutneys Lentil, pea and bean soups

Example of a low fibre meal plan

Breakfast	Fruit juice (without bits) Cornflakes or Rice Krispies with milk White bread with margarine or butter and shred-less marmalade or jam
Mid-morning	Tea, coffee or squash Plain biscuit
Lunch	Sandwiches made with white bread or crackers or plain crispbread Yoghurt One portion of fruit (from low fibre list)
Mid-afternoon	Plain scone or plain biscuit Tea, coffee or squash
Evening Meal	Meat or fish or chicken or eggs One to two portions of low fibre vegetables Potatoes or pasta or white rice Milk pudding, jelly or cheese and biscuits One portion of fruit (from low fibre list) Squash
Supper	Milky drink Plain biscuit

Reintroduction phase

If, after a four week trial of a low fibre diet your symptoms are improved, try reintroducing higher fibre foods gradually back into your diet. It is recommended to introduce only one type of fibre each week.

Please see below a guide for reintroduction. This will enable you to determine the types and amounts of fibre that you can tolerate before provoking symptoms again.

Week 1

Eating oats such as porridge, flapjacks

Week 2

Try eating the skins on potatoes and on the low fibre types of fruit and vegetables, for example apples and pears.

Week 3

Try having an extra piece of fruit or an extra portion of vegetables from the low or medium fibre list.

Five portions per day of fruits and vegetables (not including potatoes) are recommended for a healthy diet. **NB:** One glass (150ml) of fruit juice counts as one portion of fruit.

Week 4

Try replacing white bread with wholemeal or granary bread.

Week 5

Try a higher fibre breakfast cereal, for example, Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Bran Flakes.

Week 6

Try reintroducing fruits and vegetables from the high fibre lists such as bananas, dried fruit, peas, sweetcorn

Please remember to reintroduce fibre into your diet gradually. The aim is to identify a level of fibre that you can tolerate and ensure you take sufficient fluids.

Try varying the sources of your fibre intake on a daily basis within the total amount tolerated. For example, you may find that you can eat high fibre vegetables on days when you do not have wholemeal bread and high fibre breakfast cereals or vice versa.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

When restricting certain foods in your diet, you may need to take a multi-vitamin supplement to ensure you meet your requirements. Please discuss this with your doctor or ask for a referral to a local dietitian who can assess the nutritional adequacy of your diet.

Who can I contact for advice?

Dietitian _____

Contact number _____

Contact email _____



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Document history

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