

Eating Well after Ostomy Surgery

What is an ostomy?

An **ostomy** is an opening that is made from the small or large bowel to the skin on your abdomen. You may need an ostomy because of a disease or an injury. You may have an ostomy for a short time or for the rest of your life.

A **stoma** is the opening in the abdomen made by the ostomy. Stool leaves the body through the stoma.

An **ileostomy** is an ostomy in the small bowel (ileum). Most digestion happens in the small bowel. Nutrients are absorbed as food moves through your small bowel. An ostomy bag collects stool as it passes from the body through the ileostomy.

A **colostomy** is an ostomy in the colon (large bowel). The colon absorbs water and forms stool from food that was digested in your small bowel. As stool passes through the colon, more and more water is absorbed until it becomes formed. An ostomy bag collects stool as it passes from the body through the colostomy.

Output is the amount of stool put out by your ostomy. A normal output from an ileostomy is 1200 mL per day right after surgery. It will go down to about 600 mL a day over the next 2 to 3 months. A normal output from a colostomy is 200 to 600 mL per day. Ask your healthcare provider how to measure your output.

Nutrition guidelines for the first 6 to 8 weeks

Eat a balanced diet

Choose foods from all four food groups in Canada's Food Guide to stay healthy and get stronger after surgery.

For the first 6 to 8 weeks after surgery, your bowel is healing. This means that some foods may bother it.

Spread 4 to 6 small meals throughout the day. Do not skip meals

Eating moderate amounts of food regularly promotes normal bowel habits. Smaller meals in the evening may slow stoma output at night.

Eat a low fibre diet

Examples of **lower fibre** foods are:

- beef, chicken, turkey, and fish
- milk products
- most soups
- tortillas made with white flour
- puffed cereals
- vegetables and fruit without skins or seeds
- white bread
- white rice

High fibre foods may bother you, cause pain, or even block the stoma.

Examples of **higher fibre** foods are:

- bran cereals
- brown rice
- dried fruit
- legumes (peas, beans, and lentils)
- nuts and seeds
- popcorn
- vegetables and fruit with skin or seeds
- whole grain or whole wheat breads and muffins

Drink 9 to 12 cups of fluid every day

Drinking enough fluid is important for your ostomy to work properly and to prevent becoming dehydrated.

Signs of dehydration include:

- dry mouth
- dry skin
- headaches
- feeling thirsty
- feeling dizzy
- muscle cramping
- nausea
- low blood pressure
- low urine output or dark urine
- weight loss

Be sure to drink more fluids after activity and when it's hot outside.

Chew foods thoroughly

Chewing food very well helps with digestion and prevents chunks of food from becoming stuck in your bowel or stoma.

Eat slowly and in a relaxed setting

Eat slowly and in a place where you can relax and feel comfortable. This helps to prevent stomach gas and pain.

Try not to swallow air

Sit upright while eating. Don't drink from straws or bottles. This may help cut down on stomach gas and pain.

Diarrhea

Your body may lose a lot of water, potassium, and sodium when you have diarrhea. You may become dehydrated (see the list of symptoms at the top of page 2).

To prevent becoming dehydrated, sip on water and other fluids throughout the day. Also keep eating the foods that don't bother you.

If your stools are more watery than usual or you have to empty your ostomy bag more often than usual, tell your doctor or healthcare provider. An oral rehydration solution (ORS) may be suggested.

Potassium and Sodium

Potassium and sodium (salt) are lost in the stool, especially if you have an ileostomy. When you have diarrhea, eat foods higher in potassium and sodium to replace those losses.

Sources of **potassium** include fruit and vegetables such as bananas, oranges, and potatoes.

Sources of **sodium (salt)** include:

- soups and broth
- tomato/vegetable juices
- salted crackers
- pretzels
- processed cheeses
- most processed and packaged foods

Foods that absorb water

Foods that absorb water will thicken stool and slow the output from the stoma. Some of these foods are:

- bananas
- applesauce
- boiled white rice, white pasta, and barley
- cheese
- yogurt
- creamy peanut butter
- oat bran and oatmeal
- potatoes and bread
- tapioca

Smell/Odour

It is normal for stool to smell. Foods that **may** reduce the smell are:

- buttermilk
- cranberry, orange, and tomato juices
- parsley
- yogurt

Constipation

Ileostomy

It is not common to be constipated with an ileostomy. If output stops, it could mean the stoma is blocked. **Tell your doctor or nurse right away.**

Colostomy

Constipation and gas may be a problem. If you become constipated:

- drink more fluids
- gradually start to eat more high-fibre foods (see the list of *higher fibre foods* on page 1)
- ask your doctor, dietitian, or healthcare provider for more information on high-fibre foods
- don't use any laxatives without speaking to your doctor

Are you lactose intolerant?

Lactose is the sugar found in milk. Some people have problems digesting lactose for a short time after surgery. Symptoms can include gas, cramping, bloating, and diarrhea soon after drinking milk or eating certain dairy products.

Only your doctor can diagnose a true, lactose intolerance.

Milk and Alternatives have important vitamins and minerals like calcium and vitamin D, which help to build strong bones.

If you are diagnosed with lactose intolerance you don't have to avoid milk and alternatives. Here are some tips to help you enjoy them:

- Spread your milk and alternatives out during the day.
- Take smaller amounts of milk and alternatives with meals and snacks.
- Use lactase, an enzyme that helps digest lactose. It comes as pills or drops.
- Try lactose-free milk.
- Try soy and rice milk as they are lactose-free. Choose products fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
- Look for nutrition supplement drinks that are lactose-free (like Ensure® or Boost®). Read the label or ask your dietitian.

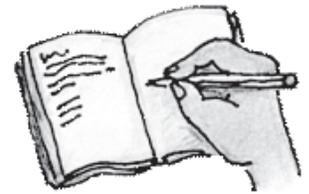
Nutrition guidelines after 6 to 8 weeks

After your bowel has healed and your ostomy is working well, you should eat foods from all four food groups in Canada's Food Guide. This includes vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, and meat and alternatives.

Although you can go back to your usual diet after an ostomy, some foods may always cause diarrhea, gas, or smell for you.

A food that bothers you may not bother someone else.

Introduce new foods one at a time. Try the new foods at least three separate times before you decide that you can't eat them. Write down the names of foods you try, and whether they cause diarrhea, gas, or an odour.



It is important to introduce foods with fibre slowly. Too much too soon can cause pain, gas, and bloating.

See the next page for a list of foods that might bother you after ostomy surgery.

Should I take a multivitamin?

Some people may need to take a daily chewable or liquid vitamin and mineral supplement. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if you should take one.

Foods that might be a problem after ostomy surgery

Below are common foods that may be a problem. Remember—they may not be a problem for you.

Food group	May cause blockage	May worsen diarrhea	May cause gas and/or a smell
Vegetables and Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cabbage • celery • corn • dried fruit • lettuce • mushrooms • olives • peas • peels/skins and seeds of vegetables and fruit • pineapple • raw vegetables • spinach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broccoli • Brussels' sprouts • cabbage • cauliflower • fruit juices (especially prune) • onions • raw fruits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asparagus* • broccoli • Brussels' sprouts • cabbage • cauliflower • cucumber • garlic* • melons • onions • peas • prunes and raisins • radishes • sauerkraut • turnip*
Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole wheat, multigrain and bran products 		
Milk and Alternatives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong cheeses (Blue Cheese, Roquefort, and "old" cheese)
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • casings of sausage or wieners • coconut • nuts and seeds • tough, stringy meat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • baked beans • dried peas, beans, and lentils • fatty meats, like bacon, salami, and bologna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peas, beans, and lentils • eggs* • fish/seafood*
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • popcorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcohol • chocolate • coffee • fatty foods, like cream sauces, gravy, ice cream • fried food • licorice • spicy foods • sugary foods and drinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcohol, beer • carbonated beverages • chewing gum • coffee * • fatty foods, like cream sauces, gravy, ice cream • spicy foods

* Only cause a smell