

Eating Well after Ileostomy Surgery

What is an ileostomy?

An **ileostomy** is an opening that is made from the small bowel (ileum) 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 where the small bowel is brought to the skin of your abdomen. Stool leaves the body through the stoma and is collected in an ostomy pouch or bag.

Most digestion happens in your small bowel. Nutrients are absorbed as food moves through your small bowel.

Output is the amount of stool put out by your ostomy. Right after surgery, output from an ileostomy is about 1200 mL a day. It may go down to about 600 mL a day over the next 2–3 months. Ask your healthcare provider how to monitor your output.

Your usual output will not be the same as other people's usual output. If you need to empty your pouch more often, and have signs of dehydration (see next column), talk to your healthcare team.

Nutrition: the first 6–8 weeks

From now until _____ (date)

For the first 6–8 weeks after surgery, your bowel is healing. This means that some foods may cause bloating, cramping, or gas.

Spread 4–6 small meals throughout the day. Don't skip meals.

Eating moderate amounts of food several times a day promotes normal bowel habits. You may slow your stoma output at night by taking smaller meals in the evening and eating foods that thicken stool.

Drink 9–12 cups (2.25–3 L) of fluid every day.

After ileostomy surgery, you will have less bowel to absorb water. Drinking enough fluid is important for your ostomy to work properly and to avoid being 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

Fluid includes water and other liquids such as milk, coffee, tea, broth, and soup.

Drink more fluids after you are active, and when it's hot outside.

Eat a lower fibre diet.

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

For 6–8 weeks after surgery:

Choose lower fibre foods

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

Avoid higher fibre foods

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

Chew foods well.

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

Eat enough protein.

You need more protein for healing after surgery. Protein helps you maintain muscle, heal your wound, and have a healthy immune system. Try to eat protein foods at each meal and snack.

Choose these protein foods:

- cheese
- cottage cheese
- eggs
- fortified soy beverage
- meat, poultry, or fish
- milk
- peanut butter and other nut butters (smooth)
- tofu
- Greek or Icelandic yogurt



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.

To cut down on stomach gas and pain:

- Sit upright while eating.
- Do not drink from straws or bottles.
- Limit or avoid carbonated (fizzy) drinks.
- Do not chew gum.

Sample meal plan for the first 6–8 weeks after surgery

The meal ideas in the Sample Meal Plan below show how you can use the eating choices in this handout, such as choosing foods lower in fibre. These are examples—your best meals may look different from these. There is space to write your own meal ideas.

Sample Meal Plan	My Meal Plan
Breakfast	
2 slices of white toast 1 tsp (5 mL) margarine 2 eggs scrambled (or 3–4 egg whites scrambled) ½ cup (125 mL) soft honeydew melon cubes	
Lunch	
Sandwich made with: 2 slices of white bread ½ cup (125 mL) canned tuna, rinsed 1 Tbsp (15 mL) low fat mayonnaise ½ cup (125 mL) cucumber, peeled and seeds removed 1 Tbsp (15 mL) salad dressing ½ cup (125 mL) applesauce	
Snack	
1½ ounces (50 g) cheese and 6 melba toasts (30 g)	
Supper	
3 oz (90 g) meatballs ½ cup (125 mL) cooked white pasta ½ cup (125 mL) tomato sauce ½ cup (125 mL) cooked sliced carrots ½ cup (125 mL) canned peaches	
Snack	
¾ cup (175 mL) Greek yogurt with no nuts or seeds and ½ cup (125 mL) canned fruit	

If you have higher output

Higher ostomy output is when your output becomes more liquid and you need to empty your pouch more often (1000–1500 mL a day).

You can lose a lot of water and minerals when your ostomy output is higher. You can quickly become dehydrated (see the *Signs of dehydration* on page 1).

Being dehydrated can be a serious medical problem.

If your ostomy output becomes higher, talk to your healthcare team. See page 4 for contact details.

Your healthcare team can give you information about:

- how to use oral rehydration solutions (ORS) instead of water to keep from becoming dehydrated
- what to do to avoid being dehydrated
- medicines and foods to treat high output

You can also ask your healthcare team for the handout *Nutrition for a High Output Ostomy*.

Odour (smell)

It's normal for stool to smell. **Foods that may reduce the odour are:**

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

See the table on the last page for foods that can cause odour.

Blockage and constipation

Most people with an ileostomy do not become constipated. If your output stops, it could mean your stoma is blocked.

Ask your healthcare team for a plan to follow if your ileostomy output stops.

Nutrition: after 6 to 8 weeks

After _____ (date)

After your bowel has healed and your ostomy is working well, you can use Canada's Food Guide to eat a variety of healthy foods every day. Visit Canada.ca/FoodGuide.

Although you can go back to your usual diet after an ostomy, some foods may always cause looser stools, higher output, gas, odour, or be a risk for blockage for you.

Tips for healthy eating:

- **Different people tolerate different foods. Foods that bother you may not bother someone else.**
- Try 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 which foods you try, and if they cause diarrhea, gas, or odour.
- It's important to introduce foods with fibre slowly. Too much too soon can cause pain, gas, and bloating.
- Tolerance can change over time. If a food bothers you, wait 2–3 weeks, and try it again.
- Drink 9–12 cups (2.25–3 L) of fluid every day.
- See the next page for a list of foods that might bother you after ileostomy 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 about whether a supplement is right for you.

Foods that might be a problem after ileostomy surgery

Below are foods that bother some people with an ileostomy even after healing. If these foods are not a problem for you, you don't need to avoid them.

Food group	May cause blockage	May cause looser stools or higher output	May cause gas or odour
Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cabbage celery corn dried fruit lettuce mushrooms olives peas peels/skins and seeds of vegetables and fruits pineapple raw vegetables spinach, kale 	<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 radishes raisins, prunes sauerkraut turnip*
Grain foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whole grain, whole wheat, multigrain, bran products 		
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> casings of sausage or wieners coconut nuts and seeds (does not include smooth nut and seed butters) tough, stringy meat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fluid milk baked beans dried peas, beans, lentils fatty meats, like bacon, salami, bologna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong cheeses (blue cheese, Roquefort, old cheeses) peas, beans, lentils eggs* fish/seafood*
Other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> popcorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alcohol drinks with caffeine: coffee, tea, colas, energy drinks chocolate higher fat foods: cream sauces, gravy, ice cream fried food licorice spicy foods sugary foods and drinks sugar alcohols (check food labels): maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol, erythritol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alcohol, beer carbonated beverages chewing gum coffee* higher fat foods: cream sauces, gravy, ice cream spicy foods

* These foods only cause an odour

If you have problems

If you are having problems or need more information, call **811 Health Link**.

Contacts: _____