

Dietary advice for people with a Colostomy

Information for patients



This leaflet has been written to give you information about diet after your colostomy.

Generally, most people who have a colostomy will have it at the end of their colon. The digestive process will have been completed by this point, so there is no special advice about what to eat and what to avoid.

However, it is important to realise that as you are no longer using your anal sphincter, you will have no control over when you pass flatus (wind). It is a good idea to avoid foods which cause excessive wind, such as baked beans, cauliflower or onions, especially if you are going to a social function, as this may cause embarrassment. It is essential that you also eat regularly, as this can help to prevent a build-up of wind.

Constipation

It is possible to become constipated, even with a colostomy, so it is essential that you eat a varied diet, which includes fruit and vegetables. It is important to make sure that you have enough fibre in your diet (such as potato skins, whole cereals, brown bread, etc.). It is also important to drink plenty of water, at least 1 to 1.5 litres a day, and more than this in hot weather.

You may find that your stoma does not produce stool every day. This may be normal for you. If you find that your stoma has not acted for more than three days, and you are feeling bloated and uncomfortable, then increase your exercise, drink more fluid and eat more fruit and vegetables that are high in fibre. You can also buy a simple laxative over the counter at most chemists, such as Senokot, lactulose or Laxido).

If you are worried or in any doubt, please contact your Advanced Nurse Practitioner or Specialist Nurse Practitioner, who will be happy to give you advice.

Alcohol

With any stoma you can still enjoy alcoholic beverages, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. It is important to be aware that drinking beer will produce an excess of wind, due to the hops that are used to make beer. This can be quite uncomfortable and embarrassing. Red wine and beetroot will cause your stools to turn a reddish colour, which can be worrying, but this is normal. White wine and spirits are fine and should have no detrimental effect on your bowel motions.

Remember to drink alcohol in moderation, and observe the safe limits. Up to 3-4 units a day for men (21-28 units per week) and up to 2-3 units a day for women (14- 21 units per week).

For guidance:

1 small glass of wine (125ml) = 1.5 units

Pint of lager/beer/cider = 3 units

1 bottle of alcopop = 1.5 units

Single shot of spirit = 1 unit

Some wines and beers have a higher alcohol content than others, but most bottles and cans now show the units that they contain.

Further information about the recommended weekly intake of alcohol can be found on the NHS Choices website:

Website: www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/alcohol-units.aspx

Bio (live) yogurt

It is a good idea to get into the practice of eating a small pot of bio or 'live' yogurt each day, or having a yoghurt drink (such as Yakult or Actimel), as this can help reduce the amount of wind and odour you produce. Some supermarkets now sell their own brand of yoghurt drink.

How to contact us

If you have any questions about your diet or concerns about what to eat, please contact your Advanced Nurse Practitioner or Specialist Nurse Practitioner.

Tel: **01865 221 839** or **01865 235 367**
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: **colorectal.nursing@ouh.nhs.uk**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Author: OUH Stoma/Colorectal Nursing Team
October 2015
Review: October 2018
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

