

Healthy Eating for people with ileal pouches

Introduction

This handout includes:

- Information about the re-introduction of food for those with a new pouch
- Guidelines to help you choose a healthy diet
- Guidance about diet in relation to developing acceptable pouch function.

Topics

- The New Patient
- The Established Patient
- Choosing a Healthy Diet
- Protein Foods
- Dairy Produce
- Starchy Foods
- Fruit and Vegetables
- Fats and Oils
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The New Patient

After surgery, it is important to take a well balanced diet to help healing and to enable you to regain any weight lost before surgery. If your operation is planned, for example in the case of a two or three stage pouch, you should eat well between operations to build up your strength. As with any operation, you may find that it takes time for your appetite to return, especially if you were unwell before the surgery. It is a good idea to reintroduce food gradually, starting with a light, soft diet which is easy to digest and will not disturb the internal surgical join (anastomosis) during healing: -

Include protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs cheese and milk to help wound healing.

- Eat starchy carbohydrates such as bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice to give you energy and to help thicken your pouch output.
- If your appetite is poor take smaller meals with snacks in between such as sandwiches, cheese and biscuits, yoghurts or nutritious drinks like milk, Build-up or other supplements as recommended by your dietitian.

- Choose plainly cooked foods and avoid spicy or highly seasoned dishes, fried foods and fibrous foods.

- Be cautious with foods which are more frequently reported to upset pouch function (see table). It takes time for your pouch to adapt and you may experience loose, frequent stools for several weeks. During this time you may be losing more fluid and salt than is normal and therefore be at risk of developing dehydration. To prevent this, you should increase your fluid and salt intake:

- Aim for at least 6 - 8 cups of fluid per day (1 ½ - 2 litres) including water, tea, coffee and powerade/gatorade.

- Add extra salt to your meals. One teaspoon of salt spread evenly throughout the day is adequate.

As your pouch settles, your stool will thicken and become less frequent, but you should continue to ensure that you have an adequate fluid and salt intake.

The Established Patient

Once your pouch begins to adapt and you become used to its normal function, you will feel more confident to experiment with food and many people find they can enjoy the freedom of a full and varied diet.

Choosing A Healthy Diet

No one food contains all the nutrients needed for health, so you should choose a variety of foods from each of the following groups to achieve an adequate intake (this may be modified by your dietitian if you are under or over weight).

Protein Foods

These provide protein, vitamins and minerals which are essential for health and repair of body tissues. Examples include: -

- Meat - beef, pork, bacon, lamb, liver, kidney
- Poultry - chicken, turkey
- Fish
- Eggs
- Beans - peas, baked beans, lentils
- Nuts chewed well or nut products such as peanut butter
- Meat alternatives - textured vegetable protein, Tofu

Include two portions from this list each day. Try to cook foods without adding extra fat. Red meats, liver, kidney, oily fish, and eggs are good sources of iron which is important for healthy blood, so try to include these regularly.

Dairy Produce

Milk, cheese and yoghurt are good sources of calcium which is important for healthy bones. These foods also provide protein and some vitamins. Try to drink half to one pint (300-600 mls) of milk each day or its equivalent as cheese or yoghurt. One cup of milk (200 mls) contains the same amount of calcium as one small carton of yoghurt (150 mls) or 30g of cheese. Choose lower fat alternatives whenever you can.

Starchy Foods

These provide energy, vitamins and fibre. Examples include: -

- Bread
- Breakfast cereals, oats
- Pasta
- Rice
- Potatoes, sweet potatoes
- Plantains, green bananas
- Dishes made with maize, millet and corn meal

These foods are reported to help thicken the stool and to reduce frequency so include a variety of foods from this group. Make these foods the main part of your meals, eat all types and include high fibre kinds if tolerated.

Fruit and Vegetables

These provide a range of vitamins and minerals which are essential for good health.

- Choose a wide variety
- Try to eat at least five small portions per day

If you find that some fruits and vegetables upset you, then try: -

- Peeled fruits
- Tinned fruits in natural juice
- Stewed, baked or pureed fruits
- Fruit juices (unsweetened)
- Well cooked or pureed vegetables
- Vegetables in soup, pureed if necessary

Fats and Oils

These provide energy, essential fats and some vitamins but too much fat is not good for health so use the following foods sparingly:

- Butter
- Margarine
- Low fat spreads
- Cooking oils
- Mayonnaise and oily salad dressings

Fats and Sugar

The following foods contain fats and sugars and may be enjoyed as a treat, but try not to eat them too often and, when you do, have small amounts:

- Cakes, Biscuits
- Puddings, Ice Cream
- Chocolate, Sweets
- Crisps
- Sugar, Sweetened Drinks

Fluid

Six to eight cups (1 ½ - 2 litres) of fluid per day are adequate for most people under normal circumstances. However, should your fluid loss increase (e.g. an increased output from the pouch, vomiting or increased sweating) then you should take extra fluid and salt to prevent dehydration. If your symptoms are severe or prolonged then consult your doctor, who may recommend a rehydration solution for you.

Alcohol

Excessive amounts of alcohol are not good for health. Some types, such as beer and wine may increase wind and pouch frequency. Take alcohol in moderation. Up to 28 units/week for men or 21 units/week for women, spread throughout the week with one or two drink-free days.

1 Unit is equal to 1/2 pint beer, a single measure of spirits, a small glass of sherry or a glass of wine.

Diet and Pouch Function

Meal pattern is very individual and may be affected by social circumstances.

- Try to develop a regular eating pattern which allows acceptable pouch function
- Smaller meals may be better tolerated, but in this case it is important to eat more often to ensure an adequate intake
- Aim to eat your meals in a relaxed environment
- Take your time and chew food thoroughly

Late evening meals may increase pouch frequency during the night and some people have reported benefits from changing the time of their main meal to earlier in the day or reducing the size of their evening meal.

Are there any foods which I should avoid?

Not as a rule. However, as a guide, foods in the following table are more frequently reported to be associated with certain symptoms and you may wish to avoid, or be careful with these, in the early days following surgery.

Please remember that people are very individual and what upsets one person may be well tolerated by another. Try all foods and only avoid those which repeatedly cause unacceptable pouch function. Tolerance may change with time, so periodically retry small quantities of any foods avoided.

Are there any foods which I should include?

The following foods have been reported to improve pouch function by thickening the stool and reducing pouch frequency. However, they do need to be included daily to achieve this effect.

- White rice
- Pasta
- Bread
- Banana

Associated Foods	Symptom
Mushrooms, sweetcorn, potatoes with skin lentils, peas, nuts, seeds, tomatoes, lettuce peppers, carrots, apple, pear, pineapple, Chinese food	passing undigested food
Baked beans, lentils, peas, onions, garlic, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, fizzy drinks, lager	increased wind
Chocolate, coffee, spicy foods (Indian, Mexican, curry), cabbage, green beans, root vegetable, citrus fruits, tinned fruit, stewed rhubarb, apple, pear, melon, grapes, fruit juice, wine, beer, wholemeal bread, weetabix, milk, cream, fried food	increased stool frequency
Nuts, seed, spicy foods (chilli, curry, sauces) citrus fruits, fruit juice	anal irritation
Fish (white, smoked, oily), onions, garlic, eggs	increased stool odour
Chocolate, fruit juice	loose stools
Chocolate, fresh peaches	increased urgency
Fizzy drinks	abdominal bloating

Summary

Take a varied and well balanced diet for good health.

- Ensure an adequate fluid and salt intake to prevent dehydration.
- Develop a regular eating pattern for acceptable pouch function.
- Try all foods and only avoid those which repeatedly cause unacceptable symptoms.