



## Healthy Eating for People with an Internal Pouch

After formation of your pouch you will continue to digest and absorb all nutrients normally in your small bowel. Resection of your large bowel results in you absorbing less water and salt, so you will initially experience quite a liquid stool from your pouch. However, with time your body will adapt to absorb more water and salt so your stool output will become thicker and your pouch frequency will reduce. You can maintain good health by taking a varied diet with an adequate amount of fluid and salt.

This leaflet contains:

- Information about the reintroduction 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

Whilst the experience of others may serve as a guide, remember that as an individual you may respond differently to food, both before and after surgery, and therefore you should base food choices on your own personal tolerance.

### Reintroduction of food after stoma closure with a new internal pouch

As with any operation, you may find it takes time for your appetite to return. It is advisable to reintroduce food gradually, starting with a light, soft diet which is easy to digest and will not disturb the internal surgical joins (anastomosis).

- Include protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese and milk to help wound healing
- Eat 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 cereal, sandwiches, cheese and crackers, yoghurts or nutritious drinks like milk or other supplements which may be recommended by your dietitian.
- Choose plainly cooked foods and avoid spicy or high seasoned dishes, fried foods and fibrous foods.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Be cautious with foods which are more frequently reported to upset pouch function.

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 normal and therefore be at risk of becoming dehydrated. To prevent this, you should ensure that you have an adequate fluid and salt intake.

- Aim for at least 6-8 cups of fluid per day (1 ½ to 2 litres) including water, tea, coffee and squashes.
- Add extra salt to your meals. Half to one teaspoon of salt spread evenly throughout the day should be adequate.
- If your stool output is high or you become dehydrated, your doctor may prescribe an oral rehydration solution for you e.g. St Mark's Electrolyte Mix. Please ask your doctor, stoma care nurse or dietitian for further advice.

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

## **Healthy eating for people with an established internal pouch**

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 that 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).

#### **Starchy Foods**

These provide energy, vitamins and fibre. Examples include:

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

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

#### **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, baked beans, peas, lentils
- Nut products- peanut butter, ground nuts
- Meat alternatives- textured vegetable protein, quorn, and tofu.

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

## Dairy Produce

Dairy products are a good source of calcium which is important for healthy bones. These foods also provide protein and some vitamins.

- Try to take ½ to 1 pint (300-600ml) of milk per day or its equivalent as cheese or yoghurt. One cup of milk (1/3 pint/ 200ml) contains the same amount of calcium as one small carton of yoghurt (5oz/ 150ml) or 1oz/ 30g of cheese, so these may be taken as alternatives to milk.
- Choose lower fat options whenever you can.

## Fruit and Vegetables

These provide fibre and a range of vitamins and minerals which are essential for good health. Choose a wide variety.

- Try to eat five portions per day.
- A portion is two tablespoons of vegetables, a small salad, a piece of fruit like an apple or banana, two tablespoons of stewed/tinned fruit or a small glass (150ml) of fruit juice.

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 or casseroles, pureed if necessary

## Fats and Oils

These provide energy, essential fats and some vitamins, however 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 eat them less often and in small amounts.

- Cakes, biscuits, chocolate, sweets
- Puddings, ice cream
- Crisps
- Sugar, sweetened drinks

## Alcohol

Excessive amounts of alcohol are not good for your health. Some types, such as beer may increase pouch frequency.

If you drink alcohol, take it in moderation: up to 28 units/week for men and 21 units/week for women, spread throughout the week with one or two alcohol free days each week.

1 unit is equal to ½ pint of beer, a single pub measure of spirits, a small glass of sherry or a small glass of wine.

## Fluid and Salt

Eight to ten cups (1.5 to 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 salt rather than extra fluid, to prevent dehydration. You could try:

- Adding extra salt to foods during cooking
- Adding extra salt after serving
- Eating more salty foods such as cheese, bacon, ham, sausages, smoked fish (kippers), shellfish, canned fish (tuna, sardines, salmon), meat and fish pastes, tinned foods such as spaghetti and ravioli, meat extracts (Oxo, Bovril), yeast extracts (Marmite), salted crisps, savoury biscuits and crackers.

If your symptoms are severe or prolonged or you feel dehydrated then consult your doctor, who may recommend an oral rehydration solution for you, e.g. St Mark's Electrolyte Mix.

## Meal Pattern

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

- Try to develop a regular eating pattern for acceptable pouch function
- Smaller meals may be better tolerated, but in this case it is important to eat more often to ensure 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.

## Common questions asked by patients about food and their pouches

### 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.

Symptoms	Associated Foods
Passing undigested food	Mushrooms, sweetcorn, potatoes with skin, lentils, peas, nuts, seeds, tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, carrots, apple, pear, pineapple, Chinese food
Increased stool frequency	Chocolate, coffee, spicy foods (Indian, Mexican), 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
Decreased stool output	Bread, rice, pasta, banana
Anal irritation	Spicy foods (chilli, curry, sauces), nuts, seeds, citrus fruits and juices
Abdominal bloating	Fizzy drinks
Increased urgency	Chocolate, fresh peaches
Loose stools	Chocolate, fruit juice
Increased wind	Baked beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, onion, garlic, peas, leeks, asparagus, lentils, spicy foods, beer, milk, fizzy drinks, lager
Increased stool odour	Fish (white, smoked, oily), onions, garlic, eggs

Please remember that people are very individual and foods which may upset 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
- White bread
- Banana

If you feel that pouch function is a problem, then do please discuss this with your doctor or contact your local GP, Stoma Nurse or Dietitian for further advice.

## 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

## Useful addresses

Red Lion Group  
Liaison Office – Red Lion Group  
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Watford Road, Harrow  
Middlesex HA1 3UJ  
Tel: 020 8235 4126  
[www.redliongroup.org](http://www.redliongroup.org)

Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group  
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Ballyclare  
BT39 9DR  
Freephone: 0800 0184 724  
Telephone: 028 9334 4043  
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This leaflet has been produced by staff in the Nutrition & Dietetic Department and the Stomacare Department at St Mark's Hospital which is part of the London North West Healthcare NHS Trust. We can be contacted at:

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