

## Eating and drinking with a colostomy

**The function of the large bowel (colon) is to absorb water and salts from our food during the process of digestion.**

If you have an 'end colostomy' then the output from your stoma is more likely to be formed and less frequent. Sometimes your colostomy may have been fashioned further up the large bowel which may mean that the output is less formed (toothpaste consistency) and may work more frequently.

On the whole, once the food reaches the large bowel most of the digestive processes have been completed. This means that you do not need to follow a special diet unless you have been advised by your GP or dietitian.

Following your operation and in the early days, certain foods or drinks may upset you, this is very individual. If you think particular food or drink has had an adverse effect on you, leave it for a few weeks then try it again. Keeping a food diary can be helpful to identify these foods.





**It is important to remember that food is to be enjoyed and is a social part of life.**

Having a colostomy should not change this although some slight alterations may need to be made.

These are general guidelines and specific advice given to you by your GP, stoma care nurse or dietitian should always be followed. You are advised to see a healthcare professional if you experience a persistent change in your stoma function or if you develop new bowel symptoms.

# Colostomy

## Wind (gas)

Everyone produces wind although this can be more awkward if you have a colostomy as it cannot be controlled as before.

Certain foods and drinks which may increase the amount of wind passed by your colostomy include beans, beer, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carbonated (fizzy) drinks, cauliflower, cucumber, eggs, leeks, lentils, mushrooms, nuts, onions, peas, spinach, sweetcorn and unripe banana.

Highly spiced, pan-fried or deep-fried and rich creamy foods can also exacerbate this too.

Often limiting or avoiding foods which are high in fibre or contain wholegrains and seeds can help.

*This list is not exhaustive and a certain amount of 'trial and error' is involved.*

## tips

### Helpful tips

- 1 Try lower fibre alternatives such as white bread, pasta and rice as well as refined cereals like cornflakes
- 2 Have smaller portions of pulses (beans, lentils, peas), vegetables and fruits with skins, pith or dried fruits, nuts and seeds
- 3 Chew your food well keeping your mouth closed
- 4 Eat slowly and try to avoid gulping air
- 5 Eat regularly and where possible don't skip meals
- 6 Avoid washing foods down with carbonated drinks or beer
- 7 Peppermint teas, water or live yoghurts may help

## Constipation

You are probably constipated if you have two or less bowel motions per week.

This can be due to lack of dietary fibre and fluids in the diet. Some medications particularly painkillers and lack of mobility can also have an effect.

Finding a balance to start with can be difficult as the same fibrous foods known to cause wind are also required in the diet to prevent constipation.

Fibre acts by absorbing the water so it's important to make sure you are also drinking plenty of fluids too, ideally 8 – 10 cups or glasses of fluid.

There are two types of fibre. Soluble fibre is found in fruit, vegetables, pulses and oats which are broken down during the process of digestion.

Insoluble fibre is found in wholegrain foods, nuts and seeds. It adds bulk and speeds up the passage of the food through the bowel.

# tips

## Helpful tips

- 1 Eat regular meals
- 2 **Gradually** increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in your diet
- 3 Change to wholemeal, granary, brown or a high fibre white bread
- 4 Try a wholegrain cereal
- 5 Try brown rice or brown pasta instead of white
- 6 Ensure you are drinking 8-10 cups of fluids per day (unless your doctor has told you not to)
- 7 Take some gentle exercise

## Diarrhoea

If you have a colostomy you can still experience diarrhoea. This can be due to a variety of reasons including stomach bugs, highly spiced food, beer, stress and antibiotics.

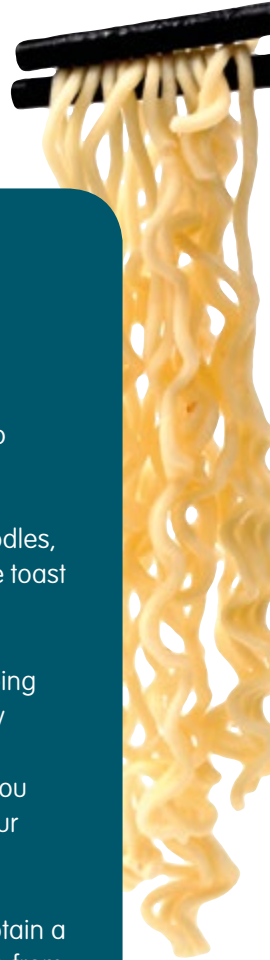
These can irritate the lining of the bowel and cause frequent and loose motions. However these effects can be reduced by eating smaller portions with plenty of pasta, rice or potatoes.

If your symptoms persist for two days or more you should seek advice from your GP, stoma care nurse or colorectal nurse.

## tips

### Helpful tips

- 1 Foods that may help thicken the output include bananas, marshmallows, noodles, white rice and white toast
- 2 Avoid the effects of dehydration by sipping clear fluids regularly
- 3 If you irrigate then you should stop until your symptoms resolve
- 4 If you are able to obtain a drainable appliance from your stoma care nurse, delivery company or chemist this could avoid frequent pouch changes



## Useful contact:

### Colostomy Association

15 Station Road  
Reading  
Berkshire RG1 1LG

[www.colostomyassociation.org.uk](http://www.colostomyassociation.org.uk)

Freephone Helpline:

0800 328 4257



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Registered charity number: 1071038 (England & Wales) SCO40914 (Scotland)  
Information correct as of February 2014