

# What Should I Eat After My Colon Surgery?

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It takes time to adjust to changes in your bowel habits after colon surgery. Small changes in your diet may help reduce symptoms of diarrhea, bloating, constipation or stomach upset, and decrease risk of dehydration.

- \***Aim for 4-6 small meals per day instead of large meals. Do not skip meals.**
- \* **Chew food thoroughly**

## **What can I eat to decrease diarrhea?**

To thicken the consistency of stool, you may need to include at least 1 of these items into each meal or snack.

- Applesauce
- Bananas
- Boiled Rice
- Bread (white), Rolls or Toast (e.g., French or Sourdough)
- Cereal (e.g., Rice or Corn Chex, Corn Flakes, Rice Krispies)
- Cheese
- Cream of Tapioca, Cream of Wheat, Cream of Rice or Grits
- Marshmallows
- Oatmeal
- Pasta (white) or Noodles
- Potatoes (without skin) - Including Sweet Potatoes
- Pretzels
- Smooth Nut Butter (peanut butter, almond butter or soy nut butter)
- Tapioca Pudding
- Yogurt and Kefir (can help with diarrhea and odor)

Frequent watery stools or diarrhea can also cause your body to lose important fluids and minerals, such as potassium and sodium, which are essential for normal functioning of your body. Your doctor or nurse may order a blood test to see if this is happening.

### **What can I drink to replace lost fluids?**

Drinking water frequently in small amounts will help to replace lost fluids. But in addition to water, you will need a source of salt and electrolytes. If you are not yet eating well, you will also need another non-alcoholic, caffeine-free, beverage such as:

- Warm water with a dissolved bouillon cube
- Orange, 100% white grape juice or cranberry juice diluted with water
- Gatorade® and Pedialyte® are good choices because they restore the body's natural minerals.

**\*Aim for 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluids per day, such as water, fruit juice, vegetable juice, vitamin water, milk and/or Gatorade.**

### **What are the symptoms of dehydration?**

- Urinating less than usual
- Dark colored urine
- Feeling tired or light-headed
- Shortness of breath with exertion
- Stomach cramps
- Dry skin
- Leg cramps
- Tingling of fingers or hands

**If you experience any of  
these symptoms,  
call your doctor at (734)  
936-5738**

## **What foods should I avoid in the few weeks after surgery?**

- Caffeinated Beverages, Alcohol and Chocolate can worsen dehydration.
- Raw Fruits (except bananas, cantaloupe and honeydew melon) and Raw Vegetables (except for small amounts of shredded lettuce), Beans and Whole Grains can cause blockages early after surgery.
- Artificial sweeteners and sugar substitutes may worsen diarrhea.
- Spicy foods and Fatty foods may not be easy to digest immediately after surgery.

## **Do I need to include fiber in my diet?**

You may need soluble fiber (see list below) to slow your digestive tract and allow for fluid to be absorbed. This will aid in thickening stool and decreasing frequency of bowel movements. Following surgery, you may require a fiber supplement 2-3 times per day. This will need to be adjusted as needed based on frequency and consistency of stool.

### **Fiber supplements that are approved for use:**

- Benefiber® (Powder or Caplets); Avoid chewable - contains sorbitol
- Citrucel® (Caplets or Chewable)
- Metamucil® (Powder, Wafers); Avoid capsules
- Metamucil Fibersure® (Clear Powder)
- NutriSOURCE Fiber (Powder)

## **How do I add foods back in?**

After 4-6 weeks, slowly start to reintroduce the Foods to Avoid (refer to page 3 of this document) back into your diet unless your doctor has told you otherwise. Try a small portion of one of these foods each day. If it does not bother you within 24 hours, it can be added to your diet. Continue to add new foods in this way.

**Examples:**

- 1-piece whole wheat toast
- ½ cup whole wheat pasta
- ¼ cup beans
- 1 medium piece of fruit like an apple, orange or pear
- ½ cup sliced vegetables like cucumbers or bell peppers or small salad

**Who do I call with questions/concerns?**

- If you have questions or concerns, please call (734) 936-5738.
- If it is after hours, a holiday, or a weekend, you may call the paging operator at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Colorectal Resident on-call.

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Author: Emily Haller, RDN and Kelli Gibbs, RDN

Reviewers: Scott Regenbogen, MD, MPH, Karin Hardiman, MD, Tammani Bidzinski, RN, Dawn Magretti, RN, Tami Walker, BSN, RN, CWOCN and Jane Theriault, BSN, RN, CWOCN

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