

Malabsorption Diet



Malabsorption of the small intestine may occur when sections of the small intestine have been removed due to disease, surgical problems or injury. This may lead to poor absorption of the fluids and foods you eat resulting diarrhea.

A special diet avoiding foods high in fat, residue (roughage) and lactose (milk sugar) can help control these problems. This diet should provide adequate fluids and minerals, help decrease your diarrhea and promote overall good nutrition.

For some people with malabsorption problems, following a special diet alone is not enough to maintain good nutrition. It may be necessary to receive some or all of your nutrition through a vein (Total Parenteral Nutrition) or through a tube inserted into your stomach or bowel (enteral nutrition). Both Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN) and enteral nutrition supply your body with all, or a portion of, the calories, protein and other nutrients your body needs. Not everyone requires TPN or enteral nutrition. However, if you do, your doctor, dietitian or nurse can help you with any questions you may have about these alternative forms of nutrition. Semi-elemental supplements may offer nutrients in forms your body can easier absorb. Ask your dietitian about these.

The following dietary guidelines will help you choose foods which should minimize your bowel problems:

- **Eating small frequent meals** (five to six per day). This can help keep you from feeling too full and getting diarrhea or gas, and help your body absorb the nutrients better.
- **Foods high in fat can increase diarrhea.** Limit foods such as butter, margarine, mayonnaise, gravies, fried foods, rich desserts, bacon, hot dogs, chipped ham, lunch meats, whole milk, sausage, peanut butter, biscuits, doughnuts, sweet rolls, muffins, croissants, avocado, pastries, and candy made with chocolate, nuts, butter or cream. Special oil supplements that are easier to absorb may be recommended by your doctor or dietitian.
- **Foods high in roughage can increase diarrhea** and may be poorly tolerated. Avoid such foods as wheat bran, nuts, raw fruits and vegetables with skin or seeds.
- **Lactose can cause or increase diarrhea.** Milk and dairy products contain lactose (milk sugar). *LactAid*® tablets and drops or *Dairy Ease*® are products which help digest the lactose for you. The tablets can be taken before you eat a dairy product or the drops can be added directly to your food or drink. Additionally, *LactAid*® (lactose free) milk can be purchased in ready-to-drink form.
- **Vitamin / mineral supplementation.** A multivitamin such as Flintstone's Complete (chewable children's vitamin) may be needed to prevent deficiencies. Ask your doctor.
- **Drink the majority of liquids between meals.** By slowly sipping fluids ½ to 1 hour before or after mealtimes you will help limit the amount of foods and liquids in your stomach at any given time.

- **Caffeine can increase your diarrhea.** Avoid large amounts of caffeinated drinks such as regular coffee, regular tea, colas, cocoa and Mountain Dew ®.
- **Include foods that will help slow and thicken stool** such as oat bran, rice, oatmeal, bread, pasta, applesauce, bananas, corn flakes, and cheese. Initially you should eat only about a ½ cup serving of these foods at a time.
- **Initially, foods high in sugar may cause diarrhea.** Therefore, you may want to avoid concentrated sugars and sweets such as table sugar, honey, jelly, syrups, ice cream, regular gelatin, pie, cake, cookies, candy and regular soda pop. You may also want to dilute juices and with additional water the first few weeks of eating.
- **You may lose large amounts of fluids and salts (minerals) in your stool.** It is important to replace these losses by increasing your intake of foods rich in potassium and sodium and drinking sports drinks (such as Gatorade ®) or liquid electrolyte supplements (such as Pedialyte ® or Rehydralyte ®). Foods high in potassium include orange juice, oranges, apricots, potatoes and bananas. Foods high in sodium include table salt, broth, canned soups, saltine crackers, pretzels and soy sauce. Tomato and V-8 ® juice contain both salt and potassium.

Keeping a record of the foods you eat and your bowel patterns (stool output) may help you identify foods which are not tolerated or which cause diarrhea. A food record can also help the dietitian determine the amount of calories and fluids you consume.

Remember that you will be the best judge of what foods you can and cannot tolerate.

The amount of fat, roughage and lactose you tolerate will need to be determined by adding new foods to your diet one at a time.

It may take several months, depending on the extent of your bowel surgery, to tolerate foods well again. If so, contact your dietitian for guidance.

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods To Avoid
<p>Meat, Fish, Poultry and Eggs</p> <p>3 - 4 servings per day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean ground or tender meats (beef, pork, chicken, veal, turkey) • Smooth peanut butter • 1 egg • ¼ cup low-fat cottage cheese • 1 ounce soft cheese (cream cheese, neufachtel) or aged cheese (swiss, cheddar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough and / or fried meats • Highly seasoned meats or cheeses • Crunchy peanut butter, nuts • Bacon, sausage, hot dogs, luncheon meats • Duck, goose • Products canned or frozen with sauces or gravies • Fish canned in oil • Poultry skins • Clams, oysters
<p>Milk And Milk Products</p> <p>2 - 3 servings per day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low - fat or skim milk prepared with a dairy digestive supplement (such as LactAid ®) • Low-fat buttermilk prepared with LactAid ® • Cottage cheese, soft cheese, aged cheese • Commercial foods made with small amounts of milk, milk products, milk solids * Note: Other low-fat milk products, such as low-fat yogurt, ice milk, etc., may be tolerated if treated LactAid ® drops, or if LactAid ® caplets are taken before eating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untreated whole, low-fat or skim milk • Untreated buttermilk • Condensed milk (high fat) • Evaporated whole milk (high fat) • Cream (high fat) • Untreated low-fat yogurt • Ice cream (high fat, high sugar) • Untreated ice milk and low-fat frozen yogurt

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods To Avoid
Breads And Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refined bread and cereals; white, fine rye or homogenized whole wheat bread, plain rolls • Saltine and soda crackers, Zwieback ® rusk, melba toast, graham crackers • Dry cereal (corn flakes, puffed rice, Rice Krispies ®, Special K ®, Cheerios ®, Grapenut ® Flakes), oatbran • Refined cooked cereals (cream of wheat, strained oatmeal) • Quick breads made with refined flours • Refined pasta, refined rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain cereals (wheat bran, shredded wheat) • Raisin Bread • Whole grain bread • Cereal not listed as allowed • Crackers or quick breads containing nuts, seeds or fruit rinds • Unrefined rice, wild rice, brown rice, whole grain parta
Vegetables Unlimited servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned or cooked: Beets, carrots, green or wax beans, peas, spinach, squash, mushrooms, asparagus, potatoes (without skins), sweet potatoes / yams • Plain tomato sauce, paste or puree • Vegetable juices • Dried peas, kidney beans and navy beans (initially limit to ½ cup serving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All raw vegetables • Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, onion, cabbage • Corn, lima beans • Vegetable skins, seeds and strings
Fruits Unlimited servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ripe bananas • Canned or cooked fruits without skins or seeds: Apples, applesauce, apricots, mandarin oranges, peaches, pears, plums, royal anne cherries • Canned orange or grapefruit sections without membranes • Strained fruit • Strained or clear fruit juice (diluted fruit juice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any fruit with seeds • Raw fruits, except ripe bananas • Dried fruits and those with tough skins • Prune juice • Citrus fruits (fresh) • Berries

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods To Avoid
<p>Fat</p> <p>Limit to 4 - 6 servings per day or as tolerated</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Amount in one serving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Salad dressing 1 tablespoon Low fat salad dressing 2 tablespoons Margarine/Butter 1 teaspoon Diet margarine 1 tablespoon Mayonnaise 1 teaspoon Low fat mayonnaise 1 tablespoon Gravy 1 tablespoon Sour cream 2 tablespoons Cream cheese 1 ½ tablespoons Light cream cheese 2 tablespoons • Fat free products (fat free sour cream, fat free cream cheese, fat free salad dressing, etc.) are allowed as desired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried foods
<p>Desserts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diet custard and puddings made with lactose free milk • Diet syrup • Diet jelly • Diet gelatin • Sugar substitute • Plain sugar cookies, graham crackers, vanilla wafers, ginger snaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich pastries • Any dessert with nuts, seeds or restricted fruits • Ice cream, ice milk • Chocolate • Candy made with nuts, coconut or other foods not allowed (such as chocolate) • Other concentrated sugars such as jelly, table sugar, honey, syrup and hard candy

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods To Avoid
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diet decaffeinated carbonated drinks• Decaffeinated coffee or tea• Cereal beverages• Commercial lactose-free liquid supplements (such as Ensure[®] and Sustacal[®])• Sugar-free beverages• Gatorade[®], Rehydralyte[®], Pedialyte[®]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beverages containing caffeine (such as regular coffee, regular soda pop, cocoa, etc.)

Sample Menu Plan

Breakfast	1 egg (not fried)	
	1 slice white toast	
	1 teaspoon margarine	
	½ cup apple juice (diluted)	
10:00 a.m.	1 cup Cheerios ®	
	½ cup <i>LactAid</i> ® milk (2%)	
	1 teaspoon sugar substitute	
Lunch	2 ounces sliced turkey	
	2 slices white bread	
	1 teaspoon mayonnaise	
	1 cup canned lite fruit cocktail	
	4 ounces V-8 ® juice	
3:00 p.m.	½ cup low fat cottage cheese	
	½ cup canned lite peaches	
	4 saltine crackers	
	4 ounces tomato juice	
Dinner	4 ounces sliced roast beef	
	½ cup cooked green beans	
	1 cup mashed potatoes with	
	1 tablespoon gravy	
	1 roll	
	1 teaspoon margarine	
	½ cup <i>LactAid</i> ® milk (2%)	
Evening	½ cup canned lite pears	4 saltine crackers
	4 saltine crackers or	1 tablespoon peanut butter
	1 slice low fat cheese	½ cup <i>LactAid</i> ® Milk (2%)
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Remember that you need to drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids during the day. Most of these should be sipped on between meals. Good choices include *LactAid* ® milk, tomato juice and Gatorade ®.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.