

Dietitian offers advice for diet after ostomy surgery

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Ostomy nurse specialist Janice Colwell, RN, MS, CWOCN, FAAN, and patient Erica Matagrano discuss stoma care. Credit: University of Chicago Medical Center

An ostomy is a surgically created opening in which the small or large intestine is brought out through an opening in the abdominal wall. Patients with inflammatory bowel disease like ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease or colorectal cancer may require ostomy surgery.

If you've recently undergone ostomy surgery, you may be concerned about your new lifestyle and diet. We asked Elizabeth Wall, advanced practice registered dietitian, a few questions about diet after an ostomy.

Which foods are off limits after ostomy surgery?

It is recommended to go on a low residue diet for at least four weeks. A low residue diet is also known as a low fiber diet. Residue is the solid contents that can reach the lower intestines. The main source of residue or fiber can be found in the following foods:

- Whole grain breads, pastas, and cereals
- Nuts and seeds
- Skins of fruits and vegetables
- Dried fruits

"A good way to remember this is to avoid any fruit or vegetables that you can't cut with the side of your fork," Wall said.

Your surgeon will let you know when it's okay to start adding fiber back into your diet.

Should I drink more fluids because I have an ostomy?

Your fluid intake will depend on whether your ostomy is located in your [small intestine](#) or colon and the length of remaining bowel.

"Be sure to discuss the amount and types of [fluid intake](#) with your ostomy nurse or registered dietitian," Wall said.

How do I reduce the ostomy output odor?

With an ostomy, foods and beverages with soluble fiber and sugar may cause gas to build up more quickly in your ostomy bag, which will cause a bad odor. You can avoid odors by limiting alcohol, dried beans and legumes, soy, dairy, onions and radishes in your diet.

When can I go off the low residue diet?

When your surgeon decides the swelling from your surgery has subsided, you can begin to slowly reintroduce the foods you would normally eat back into your diet.

"If you experience any bloating or discomfort, you may want to avoid high fiber foods for a little longer and contact your doctor's office," Wall said.

I have a lot of watery output. What should I do?

If you have loose or watery stoma output, try adding starchy foods like pasta, rice, bread, crackers, bananas, unsweetened applesauce, [peanut butter](#), tapioca, instant oatmeal or cheese into your diet," Wall said.

Provided by University of Chicago Medical Center

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