

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Dietary advice for strictures and adhesions – Soft diet

What are strictures and adhesions?

A stricture is a narrowing of the bowel that can be caused by various reasons including inflammation of the bowel, formation of scar tissue (fibrosis) following previous inflammation or cancer or radiation treatment.

An adhesion is a band of scar tissue that may cause tissues or organs inside your body to stick together. Adhesions may form after surgery or as a result of inflammation.

Severe strictures or adhesions can lead to obstruction of the bowel causing symptoms such as bloating, abdominal pain, constipation, nausea and vomiting.

Why do I need to change my diet?

When you have a stricture or adhesions, certain foods may not be able to pass through and may cause a blockage. You therefore may be required to change your diet to avoid foods that are difficult to digest and choose foods that can pass through the narrowing more easily. Foods that are difficult to digest tend to be high in fibre. In moderate - severe strictures and adhesions, even low fibre solid foods may still cause symptoms, therefore a soft diet may be needed to prevent obstruction. Foods may be softened by cooking or mashing. Adding sauces or gravy can help make your food moist.

How long would I need to follow these changes?

In some situations (i.e. inflammatory strictures) dietary changes may be temporary but if your stricture or adhesions are severe the need to adjust your diet is likely to be long-term unless you receive surgical or endoscopic intervention.

The type, length and severity of the stricture or adhesion will determine the changes that you have to make to your diet.

This booklet provides guidance on suitable low fibre, soft foods to include and foods to avoid to help manage strictures and adhesions.

	Suitable foods which you may eat	Foods to avoid
Bread and Flour	White bread, white pitta bread, white chapatti, croissant. White flour and foods made with this, cornflour, soya, tapioca, semolina.	Wholemeal, granary, brown and rye bread, wholemeal pitta bread, brown chapatti, bran, wholemeal flour and foods made with this, high fibre white breads e.g. Mighty White, Best of Both
Biscuits and cakes	Biscuits, cakes and pastry made with white flour e.g. rich tea, custard creams, chocolate coated, shortbread, éclairs, sponge cake, plain scone.	Biscuits, cakes and pastry made with wholemeal flour, oats, dried fruit or nuts e.g. digestives, hobnobs, garibaldi, fig rolls, fruit shortcake, flapjacks, cereal bars, fruit cake, mince pies, teacakes, fruit scone, danish pastry.
Cereals	Low fibre cereals that soften easily with milk e.g. Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, Cocopops, Frosties, Ricicles, Special K, Sugar Puffs Porridge, Ready Brek if tolerated	Wholegrain breakfast cereals e.g. All-bran, Branflakes, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix, Puffed Wheat, Fruit n Fibre, muesli and any cereals with added nuts, seeds or dried fruit.
Rice & Pasta	White pasta and white rice dishes that are well cooked and have sauces	Brown rice, whole wheat pasta, al dente pasta or rice
Potato	Well cooked potatoes Mash with butter/margarine, cheese, milk or cream Instant mash	Skin on potato, cold potato dishes e.g. potato salad
Pulses	If you are a vegetarian you may take a small portion of well-cooked and smooth pureed or mashed lentils without skins i.e. hummus, lentil soup	Firm beans and pulses with coarse skins e.g. kidney beans, baked beans, haricot beans, barlotti beans, chick peas, soya beans

	Suitable foods which you may eat	Foods to avoid
<p>Vegetables</p> <p>Choose 1-2 portions/day.</p> <p>A portion is 2 tablespoons cooked vegetables</p>	<p>Well cooked or mashed root vegetables i.e. carrots, Swede, parsnips</p> <p>Canned deseeded tomatoes, tomato purée</p> <p>Vegetable juice without pulp i.e. tomato, carrot</p>	<p>Avoid skins, tough stalks, or seeds on vegetables. Avoid raw vegetables such as peppers, radishes, celery, sweet corn, mushrooms</p> <p>Avoid raw salads</p> <p>Vegetable juice with pulp</p>
<p>Fruit</p> <p>choose up to 1-2 portions/ day</p> <p>A portion is 2 tablespoons stewed/ tinned fruit</p>	<p>Use soft fruits like bananas</p> <p>Cooked/ stewed fruit (no skins)</p> <p>Tinned fruit e.g. peaches, pears</p> <p>Pureed fruit and fruit Coulis</p> <p>Fruit juice e.g. orange, apple, (without pulp)</p>	<p>Fruit skins, pips, pith, seeds and stones.</p> <p>Berries e.g. strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, gooseberries</p> <p>Dried fruit e.g. apricots, currents, dates, prunes, raisins, sultanas.</p> <p>Fruit juice with pulp</p>
<p>Nuts & Seeds</p>	<p>Smooth peanut butter, other smooth nut butters</p>	<p>All nuts, coconut, marzipan and seeds, chunky/ rough nut butters</p>
<p>Meat, Fish and protein alternatives</p>	<p>Soft tender lean meats, dishes with sauces, casseroles, stews or minced meat</p> <p>White fish poached, steamed, boiled or baked with milk and butter, dishes with sauces</p> <p>Tinned fish, such as salmon, tuna or pilchards</p> <p>Eggs, tofu</p>	<p>Tough, gristly meat or skin</p> <p>Boney fish e.g. sardines</p>

	Suitable foods which you may eat	Foods to avoid
Milk, Cheese & yogurt	All milk, cheese, natural & smooth fruit yoghurts and fromage frais, cream	Yoghurts or fromage frais containing fruit, nuts, dried fruit or muesli
Desserts and puddings	Milk puddings, custard, jelly, ice-cream, mousse, sorbet, pastries, sponge pudding, trifle, pancakes	Puddings made with fruit, nuts, dried fruit, oats or wholemeal flour.
Sugar, Preserves, Sweets	Sugar, seedless jam, honey, fine cut marmalade, lemon curd, syrup, milk chocolate, boiled sweets, fruit pastilles, fruit gums and peppermints	Jams with seeds or skins, thick cut/chunky marmalade, sweet mincemeat, sweets and chocolate containing dried fruit or nuts e.g. Fruit and Nut chocolate, Snickers, Topic, Picnic and Bounty. Liquorice Allsorts
Snacks	Skips, Wotsits, Quavers, Monster Munch, Prawn Crackers, Frazzles, Bacon Streaks, potato crisps	Chevda, Sev, Twiglets, Tortilla Chips
Sauces & Flavourings	All including tomato puree, cream and cheese sauces, tomato ketchup, brown sauce, salad cream, mayonnaise, French dressing, salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar, herbs and spices	Chutney, pickle, vegetable based sauces, black bean sauce, wholegrain mustard
Soups	Clear, cream or strained soups	Any soup containing vegetable pieces.

Frequently asked questions

How can I increase the flavour of food?

- If you find your food is bland without fruits or vegetables then try flavouring your cooking with salt, pepper, herbs, spices, tomato puree.
- Make food look as attractive as possible by garnishing it with lemon, parsley or other herbs (but do not eat the garnish). Alternatively try adding a dash of cream, yoghurt or grated cheese to soups or casseroles.
- When making casseroles or stews, cut the vegetables into large chunks so that they can be left behind when serving the meat or gravy. This will enable you to enjoy the flavouring of vegetables in the meal without eating the fibre.

Will I get constipated on this diet?

Depending on how severe your stricture or adhesions are you may still be able to include some fibre in your diet, however, if you are concerned about becoming constipated or if you are unable to open your bowel, contact your doctor for advice.

Do I need a multivitamin and mineral?

A general multivitamin and mineral maybe required if you cannot manage fruit and vegetables. Discuss this with your dietitian or doctor.

What do I do if I get obstructed?

- If you experience obstructive symptoms such as bloating, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting you may need to avoid eating and only have fluids for one or two days. Often this can treat the problem by preventing it from developing to a full bowel obstruction.
- However if your symptoms do not settle it is important to contact your GP or your Consultant as you may need to be admitted to hospital for treatment.

General eating tips

- Eat smaller meals or snacks every 3-4 hours
- Chew food well and take time over meals
- Foods that are easy to mash to a smooth consistency are usually better tolerated
- Avoid drinking large volumes of fluids with meals. Instead consume 6-8 cups (3-4 pints or 1.5-2L) around meals to maintain hydration
- Keep a food and symptom diary to see if there are any foods or fluids that may be exacerbating your symptoms.

If you have a poor appetite and losing weight

- Try to have 4-6 smaller meals and snacks per day
- Choose full fat dairy options—full fat milk, cheese, yoghurts
- Fortify your meals: Add 4tbsps of skimmed milk powder to 1 pint of whole milk and use on cereals, puddings and beverages. Add margarine/butter/grated cheese to vegetables, potatoes, soups.
- Try having nourishing drinks including milky drinks, or nutritional supplement drinks (e.g. Complan / Meritene/ Nourishment) between meals.
- Choose high energy snacks between meals (see our snack/pudding ideas on the page)
- If you have any difficulties with eating or are concerned about your weight then contact your dietitian for further advice.

Snack / Pudding ideas:

- Wotsits, Quavers
- Biscuits – dunk in hot drinks to soften
- Soft cheeses, such as Philadelphia, Laughing Cow, cottage cheese, Babybel, Dairylea
- Dips such as taramasalata, hummus
- Yoghurts, fromage frais, fruit fool, mousse or Angel Delight
- Ice cream or sorbet
- Crème caramel or milk jelly
- Milky puddings like rice pudding, sago, semolina, tapioca (add jam or honey to these if desired)
- Chocolate (without nuts or fruit)
- Plain scotch pancakes with seedless jam/honey or maple syrup
- Sponge/ moist cakes (without nuts or fruit) and custard
- Soft tinned/stewed/defrosted frozen fruit or fruit compote with cream/custard

Nourishing drink ideas

High protein milk

250ml (1 cup) full fat milk or milk alternative
2 tablespoons dried milk powder
1 tablespoon flavoured milk powder
Add 1 Scoop of Ice cream to boost energy

Yoghurt Smoothie

250ml (1 cup) plain yoghurt
125ml (1/2 cup) fruit juice (no pulp)
honey to taste

Example Sample Menu

Breakfast	Fruit juice (no pulp / bits) Suitable cereal with milk Or soft white bread with margarine and seedless jam/honey/marmite Scrambled/boiled egg with white toast and spread Tea / coffee
Lunch	White bread sandwich with meat /fish/hummus/ cheese/ egg Or soup with white bread Baked potato with no skin with cottage cheese/tuna and mayonnaise/grated cheese Or omelette with cheese Or white chapatti/white soft rice with suitable vegetables well cooked, well cooked mashed lentils (no skins) Canned/peeled fruit Water /fruit squash/ milk/ tea/ coffee
Dinner	Chicken/fish/mince meat (no skin, bones, gristle) with sauce mashed potato/ jacket potato no skin Well cooked vegetables Or white chapatti/white soft rice with suitable vegetables well cooked, well cooked mashed lentils (no skins) Or pasta with grated cheese and/ or mince meat/ chicken/ fish and suitable vegetables well cooked (avoid hard stalks) Or pasta dishes i.e. Macaroni cheese, lasagne, cannelloni or ravioli Custard/tinned fruit/yoghurt/rice pudding

For further information

This leaflet has been produced by staff in the Nutrition and Dietetics department of The North West London Hospitals NHS Trust.
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