

## Low irritant, high fibre diet

### Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for people who may need to restrict their fibre intake for a medical reason. You will be advised exactly how to do this with the guidance and support from a healthcare professional in your medical team or dietitian.

There are a variety of reasons why you may have been asked by your medical team or dietitian to follow a low irritant, high fibre diet. Some examples are listed below:

- before and/or after bowel surgery
- after the insertion of a colonic stent
- if you have bowel adhesions or narrowing of the colon

### What is fibre?

Dietary fibre (also known as roughage) is the part of food that cannot be easily digested. Fibre is not digested in our small intestine – it moves into our colon or large intestine where some of it will be broken down. Fibre also helps our stools form a 'bulk' and makes them solid.

### Different types of fibre:

There are two main types of fibre: **soluble and insoluble (irritant) fibre**.

**Soluble fibre** is easily digested in our large intestines/colon and dissolves with water to form a gel. For example:

- porridge oats
- the flesh of fruits eg apples, pears, bananas
- root vegetables

**Insoluble (irritant) fibre** passes through our body without being broken down or absorbed. For example:

- the skins, pips and seeds of fruit and vegetables
- fibrous fruits and vegetables eg rhubarb, celery
- raw or undercooked vegetables
- vegetables that humans are unable to digest eg mushrooms, sweetcorn, lettuce and other salad leaves

**An example of the two different types of fibre can be seen in a tomato.**

- **Soluble fibre** is the fleshy part of the tomato. This will dissolve in the large intestine and helps to add bulk to stools.
- **Insoluble (irritant) fibre** is the skin and seeds of the tomato. These are the parts that are not possible for your gut to digest.

### What is a low irritant high fibre diet?

This diet involves cutting out the insoluble (irritant) fibre from your diet. This should help to reduce any symptoms you might be having. By removing the insoluble (irritant) fibre you will not

eat the type of fibre that your body cannot digest and that passes through your gut relatively unchanged.

It is important to still include good amounts of soluble fibre in your diet. This is less likely to cause symptoms and will soften and bulk your stools. This leaflet gives some examples of suitable and less suitable foods you can eat.

## How long will I need to follow this diet?

You will be given advice by your medical team or dietitian about how long you need to follow this diet for, depending on your individual circumstances.

## What fruit and vegetables can I eat?

When you follow a low irritant high fibre diet, there are certain fruits and vegetables that will pass through your bowel more easily. It is important to still have a high fibre diet. Aim to eat **no more than** five portions of fruit and/or vegetables every day. A portion is roughly 80 grams, or the equivalent of a handful. Always aim to choose from the 'suitable foods' list over those from the 'less suitable foods' list.

### Fruits

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Apples (peeled)</li> <li>■ Apricots (fresh, peeled)</li> <li>■ Bananas</li> <li>■ Mango</li> <li>■ Melon</li> <li>■ Nectarines (peeled)</li> <li>■ Papaya</li> <li>■ Pears (Peeled)</li> <li>■ Peaches (peeled)</li> <li>■ Plums (peeled)</li> <li>■ Watermelon (no pips)</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fruit juice (no bits)</li> <li>■ Puréed, stewed or cooked fruit (without skins, pips or stones)</li> <li>■ Tinned fruit</li> <li>■ Fruit sauces and coulis with pips removed eg sieved raspberry coulis, apple sauce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Blackberries</li> <li>■ Blackcurrants</li> <li>■ Blueberries</li> <li>■ Cherries</li> <li>■ Clementines</li> <li>■ Coconut</li> <li>■ Cranberries (fresh and dried)</li> <li>■ Dates</li> <li>■ Dried apricots</li> <li>■ Figs</li> <li>■ Gooseberries</li> <li>■ Grapefruit</li> <li>■ Grapes</li> <li>■ Kiwi</li> <li>■ Mandarins</li> <li>■ Oranges</li> <li>■ Passion fruit</li> <li>■ Pineapple</li> <li>■ Pomegranate</li> <li>■ Prunes</li> <li>■ Raisins</li> <li>■ Raspberries</li> <li>■ Redcurrants</li> <li>■ Rhubarb</li> <li>■ Satsumas</li> <li>■ Strawberries</li> <li>■ Sultanas</li> <li>■ Fruit juice with bits</li> </ul>

## Vegetables

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<p><b>All vegetables need to be <u>well cooked</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Aubergine (peeled and deseeded)</li> <li>■ Avocado</li> <li>■ Broccoli (no stalks)</li> <li>■ Butternut squash</li> <li>■ Cabbage (white or green)</li> <li>■ Carrots</li> <li>■ Cauliflower (no stalks)</li> <li>■ Celeriac</li> <li>■ Chilli purée</li> <li>■ Courgette (peeled)</li> <li>■ Cucumber (peeled and deseeded)</li> <li>■ Daikon (Asian radish)</li> <li>■ Garlic purée</li> <li>■ Gem squash</li> <li>■ Ginger purée</li> <li>■ Horseradish purée</li> <li>■ Lemongrass purée</li> <li>■ Marrow (peeled)</li> <li>■ Onion (well-cooked)</li> <li>■ Parsnips</li> <li>■ Patty pan (peeled)</li> <li>■ Peppers (peeled and deseeded)</li> <li>■ Pumpkin</li> <li>■ Shallots (well cooked)</li> <li>■ Spinach (well cooked)</li> <li>■ Swede</li> <li>■ Tomato passata</li> <li>■ Tomatoes (peeled and deseeded)</li> <li>■ Turnips</li> <li>■ Smooth vegetable soups (made with allowed vegetables)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Asparagus</li> <li>■ Baby corn</li> <li>■ Bean sprouts</li> <li>■ Beetroot</li> <li>■ Bok Choi</li> <li>■ Broad beans</li> <li>■ Brussel sprouts</li> <li>■ Beans (French, green, runner)</li> <li>■ Celery</li> <li>■ Chicory</li> <li>■ Chilli (fresh)</li> <li>■ Coleslaw</li> <li>■ Edamame</li> <li>■ Fennel</li> <li>■ Garlic (whole, raw or undercooked)</li> <li>■ Gherkins</li> <li>■ Ginger</li> <li>■ Globe artichokes</li> <li>■ Jerusalem artichokes</li> <li>■ Kohlrabi</li> <li>■ Leeks</li> <li>■ Lemongrass</li> <li>■ Lettuce</li> <li>■ Mangetout</li> <li>■ Mushrooms</li> <li>■ Okra</li> <li>■ Olives</li> <li>■ Onions (whole, raw or undercooked)</li> <li>■ Pak choi</li> <li>■ Peas</li> <li>■ Pickled onions</li> <li>■ Plantain</li> <li>■ Radish</li> <li>■ Rocket</li> <li>■ Salad leaves</li> <li>■ Shallots (whole, raw or undercooked)</li> <li>■ Soya beans</li> <li>■ Spinach (raw)</li> <li>■ Spring greens</li> <li>■ Spring onions</li> <li>■ Sugar snap peas</li> <li>■ Sweetcorn</li> <li>■ Tomatoes (whole, with skins and pips)</li> <li>■ Watercress</li> <li>■ Yam</li> </ul>

**Other**

- All skins, pips and seeds
- Tough stalks of vegetables eg cauliflower, broccoli
- Raw vegetables
- Soup with whole vegetables eg minestrone

**What starchy foods can I eat?****Potato, rice and pasta****Suitable foods**

- Buckwheat
- Hash browns (plain)
- Millet
- Noodles (egg, rice, vermicelli, udon)
- Pasta (white, brown, wholemeal)
- Pastry (white, wholemeal)
- Pearl barley
- Potatoes (peeled)
- Rice pudding
- Rice (white, brown)
- Sweet potatoes (peeled)
- Tapioca, sago, semolina
- Waffles
- White couscous
- Yams, peeled
- Yorkshire pudding

**Less suitable foods**

- Barley
- Hash browns (made with onion)
- Skins of potatoes
- Spelt
- Whole wheat couscous
- Bulgur wheat
- Wild rice
- Quinoa

**Cereals, bread and flour****Suitable foods****Breakfast cereals:**

- Coco pops®
- Cheerios®
- Cornflakes®
- Frosties®
- Oats
- Porridge (plain)
- Ready Brek®
- Rice Krispies®
- Special K® (without berries)

**Breads such as white, 50/50 and wholemeal etc.**

- Bagels
- Brioche
- Cheese scones

**Less suitable foods****Breakfast cereals:**

- Cereals containing dried fruit, seeds or nuts
- All Bran®
- Bran flakes®
- Crunchy Nut Cornflakes®
- Fruit n Fibre®
- Granola
- Muesli
- Porridge with berries
- Special K with berries
- Sultana Bran®
- Wholemeal, wholegrain and bran cereals
- Weetabix®

**Breads such as wholegrain, granary, rye, seeded**

- Crackers (wholegrain)
- Crispbreads (wholegrain or seeded)
- Granary bread, rolls, baguettes, pitta bread

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Crackers (without seeds and grains)</li> <li>■ Crispbreads</li> <li>■ Croissants</li> <li>■ Crumpets</li> <li>■ Melba toast,</li> <li>■ Muffins (without berries)</li> <li>■ Oat cakes</li> <li>■ Pitta bread</li> <li>■ Rice cakes</li> <li>■ Scotch pancakes</li> <li>■ Tortilla wraps</li> <li>■ White bread, rolls, baguettes</li> <li>■ Wholemeal bread, rolls, baguettes</li> </ul> <p><b>Flour:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Chickpea flour</li> <li>■ Cornflour</li> <li>■ Cornmeal</li> <li>■ Gram flour</li> <li>■ Rice flour</li> <li>■ Potato flour</li> <li>■ White Flour</li> <li>■ Wholemeal flour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Malted bread eg Soreen®</li> <li>■ Muffins (with berries or made with wholegrain flour)</li> <li>■ Multigrain bread</li> <li>■ Rye bread</li> <li>■ Seeded bread</li> <li>■ Wholegrain bread, rolls, baguettes, pitta bread, tortilla wraps</li> </ul> <p><b>Flour:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bran</li> <li>■ Granary flour</li> <li>■ Wholegrain flour</li> </ul>
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## What protein foods can I eat?

### Meat, fish, poultry, eggs

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All types of fish, meat and meat products (fresh, frozen, tinned) with skin, gristle, visible fat removed</li> <li>■ Eggs</li> <li>■ Smooth paté or liver sausage</li> <li>■ Quorn, soya and meat alternatives</li> <li>■ Soya mince</li> <li>■ Tofu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Coarse paté made with onions</li> <li>■ Convenience items which contain whole grains and vegetables eg onions, peppers</li> <li>■ Skin and bones of fish</li> </ul>

### Pulses, nuts and seeds

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ground nuts</li> <li>■ Ground seeds</li> <li>■ Marzipan</li> <li>■ Smooth peanut butter and other nut butters</li> <li>■ Smooth houmous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All beans eg black, borlotti, cannellini, kidney, soya, baked beans, broad beans</li> <li>■ All pulses eg lentils, chickpeas</li> <li>■ All seeds eg sunflower, pumpkin, sesame, poppy, chia</li> <li>■ All whole nuts</li> <li>■ Crunchy nut butters</li> <li>■ Houmous with whole chickpeas</li> </ul>

## What dairy foods can I eat?

Suitable	Less Suitable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Butter, margarine, spread</li> <li>■ Buttermilk</li> <li>■ Cheese (without dried fruit and nuts)</li> <li>■ Cream, crème fraîche</li> <li>■ Custard</li> <li>■ Milk (almond, cow's, goat's, sheep's, soya, rice, oat)</li> <li>■ Yoghurt (natural and with 'uitable' fruit)</li> <li>■ Ice cream and sorbet (no nuts and seeds)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cheese (with nuts, seeds, pips or 'less suitable' fruits)</li> <li>■ Ice cream and sorbet (with nuts, seeds, pips or 'less suitable' fruits)</li> <li>■ Yoghurt (with nuts, seeds, pips or 'less suitable' fruits)</li> </ul>

## What sweet treats can I eat?

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Boiled or jelly sweets</li> <li>■ Biscuits (rich tea, custard creams, digestives, malted milk, bourbon creams, Nice®, ginger nuts, shortbread)</li> <li>■ Cakes made with white or wholemeal flour (without dried fruit or nuts)</li> <li>■ Chocolate (without dried fruit and nuts)</li> <li>■ Flapjacks (without dried fruit or nuts)</li> <li>■ Jelly or milk jelly (without fruit)</li> <li>■ Marshmallows</li> <li>■ Pancakes</li> <li>■ Scones (plain)</li> <li>■ Toffee, fudge</li> <li>■ Puddings such as cheesecake, crème brulee, crème caramel and rice pudding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Biscuits containing dried fruit (fig rolls, Garibaldi®)</li> <li>■ Cakes made with dried fruit and nuts</li> <li>■ Cereal bars containing dried fruit and nuts</li> <li>■ Chocolate with nuts, seeds and dried fruit</li> <li>■ Fruit scones</li> <li>■ Hot cross buns</li> <li>■ Jelly made with 'less suitable' fruits</li> <li>■ Nougat</li> <li>■ Tea cakes</li> <li>■ Wholegrain biscuits e.g. Hobnobs®</li> </ul>

## What savoury snacks can I eat?

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cheese biscuits (mini cheddars, Ritz®, TUC® sandwich biscuits)</li> <li>■ Cheese scones</li> <li>■ Cheese straws</li> <li>■ Crisps, tortilla chips</li> <li>■ Plain bread sticks</li> <li>■ Smooth dips (taramasalata, sour cream, smooth guacamole)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bombay Mix</li> <li>■ Dips that contain whole tomatoes, cucumbers, onions (eg salsa, tzatziki)</li> <li>■ Nuts</li> <li>■ Popcorn</li> </ul>

## What condiments can I eat?

Suitable foods	Less suitable foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Barbecue sauce</li> <li>■ Bovril®</li> <li>■ Brown sauce</li> <li>■ Coconut cream</li> <li>■ Dried herbs</li> <li>■ Ginger, garlic, lemongrass, chilli, horseradish purée</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Chutney (with fruit)</li> <li>■ Desiccated coconut</li> <li>■ Jam with seeds</li> <li>■ Marmalade with peel</li> <li>■ Pickles and relishes</li> <li>■ Salad dressing made with wholegrain mustard</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Golden syrup</li> <li>■ Gravy (no onions)</li> <li>■ Honey</li> <li>■ Lemon curd</li> <li>■ Maple syrup</li> <li>■ Marmite®</li> <li>■ Mayonnaise</li> <li>■ Nutella®, hazelnut spread</li> <li>■ Stock cubes (all flavours)</li> <li>■ Powdered spices</li> <li>■ Salad cream</li> <li>■ Salt and pepper</li> <li>■ Seedless jam or marmalade</li> <li>■ Smooth nut butters (eg almond, hazelnut, peanut)</li> <li>■ Smooth chutneys</li> <li>■ Smooth mustard</li> <li>■ Soy sauce</li> <li>■ Tabasco® sauce</li> <li>■ Tomato ketchup</li> <li>■ Treacle</li> <li>■ Worcester sauce</li> <li>■ Vegemite®</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Stalks and leaves of fresh herbs</li> <li>■ Wholegrain mustard</li> </ul>
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### Tips for following a low irritant, high fibre diet

- Be prepared! Plan your meals in advance so that you have the right ingredients in the fridge/cupboard.
- Preparing the vegetables takes a little more time, so build this into your day.
- Buy large beef tomatoes – these have more flesh and are easier to skin and de-seed.
- When cooking stews and casseroles use whole onions to flavour the gravy/sauce. These can be removed before serving.
- Peel and chop 'suitable' fruits to make a fruit salad. You can eat a portion as a snack to ensure you are getting adequate fibre.

### How and when should I reintroduce fibre to my diet?

The re-introduction of insoluble (irritant) fibre should be taken slowly. When you are allowed to relax your diet, always try to start by introducing one food at a time.

### What can I eat for breakfast?

- Avocado on wholemeal toast
- Eggs: omelette, scrambled, poached or boiled with wholemeal toast
- Cereal eg corn flakes, Rice Krispies®
- Ready Brek® or plain porridge
- Natural yoghurt and fruit (from the allowed list)
- Smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, Petit filou®, Skyr® yoghurt, Coconut collaborative® natural yoghurt
- Glass of fruit juice (no bits)
- Smoothie (made with 'suitable' fruit and vegetables)
- Milkshake (made with 'suitable' fruit)

## What can I eat for my main meal?

- Always cook vegetables well and choose from the 'suitable' lists
- Lancashire hotpot
- Cottage pie, shepherd's pie
- Corned beef hash with gravy
- Stews and casseroles
- Grilled, roasted, sautéed meat, fish or tofu
- Minced meats or soya mince eg chilli con carne (no beans) or Bolognese
- Macaroni cheese
- Poached/grilled fish (no bones)
- Fish pie, fish mornay
- Tinned fish (tuna, salmon – no bones) with mayonnaise or sauce
- Meat or fish curry (limit onions or peppers or vegetables from the 'less suitable' lists)

Serve any of the above with mashed potatoes, mashed sweet potatoes, peeled boiled potatoes, polenta, white couscous, quinoa, rice or pasta.

## What can I eat for my snack meal?

- Eggs, scrambled, poached, fried or boiled
- Omelette with cheese
- Quiche (limit those with onions or products from the 'less suitable' lists)
- Soufflés eg cheese, salmon
- Wholemeal toast, crumpets, muffins or pitta bread with:
  - Tinned salmon or tuna with mayonnaise
  - Boneless sardines or kippers
  - Cheese
  - Eggs
  - Smooth houmous
  - Avocado
- Sandwiches made with wholemeal bread, baps, bagels with:
  - Cold meats eg chicken, turkey, corned beef, paté
  - Smoked salmon and cream cheese
  - Tinned tuna or salmon
  - Egg mayonnaise
  - Smooth houmous
  - Marmite®, vegemite® or Bovril®
  - Smooth nut butters
  - Cheese or cream cheese
- Bowl of soup
- Chicken, oxtail, carrot and coriander, butternut squash
- Smooth vegetable soups (aim to choose from the 'suitable' lists and avoid soups that contain beans or lentils)
- Add a small portion of noodles or pasta to a smooth soup or broth
- Wontons in clear soup or broth
- Jacket potato (no skin) served with:
  - Cheese and butter
  - Tuna mayonnaise
  - Egg mayonnaise
  - Tikka or curry sauce



- Coronation chicken
- White or wholemeal crackers or breadsticks with:
  - Dips e. sour cream, taramasalata, guacamole
  - Tuna, salmon or egg mayonnaise
  - Smooth houmous
- Avocado with flaked crab meat or prawns in a cocktail sauce

### What can I eat for my pudding?

- Milk puddings eg plain or chocolate custard, rice pudding, semolina, tapioca
- Sponge pudding or cake with cream, smooth ice cream or custard, eg Madeleines, Battenberg, Madeira, Angel Slices, caramel cake bars, mini chocolate rolls, lemon slices
- Blancmange, mousse, fruit fool, trifle (no pips), milk jelly, Angel Delight®, instant whip
- Tinned or stewed fruit with added cream, yoghurt, crème fraiche, custard or ice cream
- Fruit crumble (no oats or dried fruit) with added cream, yoghurt, ice cream or custard
- Smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, egg custard, crème caramel
- Smooth ice cream, sorbet, frozen yoghurt, Mini Milk®, Mini Magnum®

### What snacks can I eat between meals?

- Piece of fruit (from 'suitable' fruits list)
- Plain biscuits eg rich tea, Nice®, malted milk, custard creams, digestives
- Yoghurt or fromage frais
- Spoonful of smooth nut butter eg almond butter, peanut butter
- Portion of cheese
- Glass of milk

### How much and what should I drink?

It is important to drink plenty of fluid each day to prevent dehydration. **Try to drink at least eight glasses of fluid a day.** This can include water, squash, juice, milk, tea and coffee. Always try to choose unsweetened drinks.

### Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

### Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or [eshtr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:eshtr.patientexperience@nhs.net).

### Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

### Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## References

With grateful thanks to the Nutrition and Dietetics team at the Royal Surrey for allowing us to adapt and share their resource.

- British Nutrition Foundation: [Fibre - Nutrition Information - British Nutrition Foundation](#)
- Eswaran S, Muir J, William C (2013) Fiber and functional gastrointestinal disorders. The American Journal of Gastroenterology 108: 718-727
- Gandy J (ed) Manual of Dietetic Practice 6th Edition. 2019 Wiley-Blackwell Publishing

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The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet: CHIC Clinical Governance Team

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