



# A guide to...

## Colostomy Diet Sheet

### *Patient Information*

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If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille, or audio version, please call **01923 217 198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



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## What is a Colostomy?

A **colostomy** is formed when part of the colon (large bowel) is brought out onto the surface of the abdomen, to form a stoma (opening).

Waste material will pass out of the stoma into an external bag which will need to be changed regularly.

Initially, after your operation, your stoma will be active frequently and the output might be liquid in consistency.

As your colon adapts this will decrease and the output will thicken.

## After the operation

1. Your body needs **extra energy** and **protein** to aid recovery
2. You may also find your **appetite** is **reduced** which can take a little time to recover

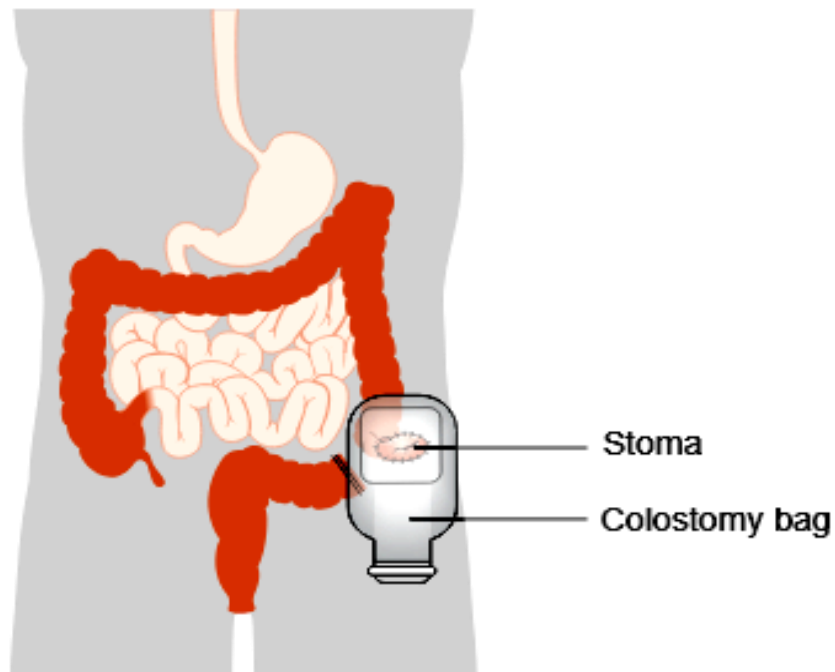
Some ideas to increase energy and protein into your diet **until your appetite has fully returned:**

- Have three small meals with snacks in between
- **Snack ideas:** biscuits, cheese and crackers, toast, sausage rolls, crisps, cakes, chocolate, full fat yoghurts, rice pudding, fruit
- Use full fat version of dairy products
- Add butter or margarine to cooked potatoes and vegetables
- Add cream of full fat milk to sauces and soups
- Desserts – add custard, or ice cream, or cream
- Breakfast cereals – add sugar, honey, full fat yoghurt
- Include mayonnaise, margarine, butter, or salad cream to sandwiches
- Add two to four tablespoons of skimmed milk powder into one pint of full fat milk and use in place of your ordinary milk
- If you do not feel like cooking, ready meals/frozen meals, or takeaways are useful occasionally
- Make up soups and jellies with full fat milk instead of water
- Consider trying **Build Up, Complan, or Nourishment** nutritious drinks which can be brought at most supermarkets, or chemists
- Drink nutritious fluids such as milk, fruit juice, hot chocolate, malt drinks

## General Dietary Advice

- Eat regularly
- Chew foods well and avoid rushing meals
- There is no specific diet for a person with a colostomy. Enjoy a variety of foods, aiming for a **healthy balanced diet**. You should not need any extra vitamin or mineral supplements. If you have any concerns, please contact your GP, or Dietitian.
- Drink at least 8-120 cups of fluid per day
- Certain foods, or drinks, may affect your stoma output or increase wind. Retry it a few weeks later, your guts may have settled down. Try the food in a smaller quantity as you may be able to tolerate smaller amounts
- Once your colostomy begins to adapt and you become used to its normal function, you will feel more confident to experiment with foods and many people find they can enjoy a full and varied diet
- Monitor your weight weekly. Please highlight to your GP, or Dietitian, if your weight continues to drop
- It is important not to restrict your diet. Trial and error will show if there is a food or fluid that particularly upsets you

### The aim is to minimise dietary restrictions



# Possible Colostomy Problems

## Constipation

### Possible Causes

- Irregular meal pattern
- Inadequate fluid intake
- Inactivity
- Low fibre intake or too much fibre with poor fluid intake
- Certain medications, such as, Imodium, or iron tablets

### What to do

- Eat regularly
- Have gentle exercise
- Drink at least 8-10 cups of fluid per day
- Speak to your GP about medications
- If constipation persists, contact your GP

## Wind or Bloating

Wind (flatus) is a natural part of digestion. There can be an increased amount of wind and bloating post-surgery, but it often improves with time.

### Possible Causes

- Swallowing air whilst eating
- Fizzy drinks
- Chewing gum
- Some vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, sprouts, baked beans
- Spicy foods

### What to do

- Eat and drink slowly
- Avoid using drinking straws
- Chew food well
- Eat at regular intervals
- Try peppermint tea, or peppermint oil capsules

## Odour

### Possible causes

Foods:

- Onions
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Beans
- Fish
- Eggs
- Spices
- Asparagus
- Strong cheeses

### What to do

- This **does not** mean that you **cannot** eat these foods
- Try fresh parsley, a natural odour eater
- Adding vinegar to fish dishes can alleviate fishy smells

## Diarrhoea

### Possible causes

- Stress
- Stomach bug
- Food poisoning
- Emotional upset
- Laxatives
- Caffeine
- Alcohol

### What to do

- Alcohol in moderation and take with food
- Rehydration solutions
- Low fibre diet until diarrhoea resolves

## Special Notes

- Certain foods may change the colour of your output. Beetroot, tomatoes, or red peppers may change your stool colour to red, or have the appearance of blood
- Iron tablets can make your stools black
- Laxatives should be avoided when you have a colostomy

**Useful website:** [www.colostomyassociation.org.uk](http://www.colostomyassociation.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0800 328 4257