



A guide to...

High output stoma dietary advice

Patient Information

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What is a stoma?

A stoma is an opening that is made through the tummy (abdominal) wall. It is created when some or all of the small or large intestine is removed. It connects the bowel to the surface of the tummy so that waste products can empty from the body directly into a collection bag (this is usually referred to as 'output').

How do I know if I have a high output stoma?

A patient is considered to have a high output stoma (HOS) if their output is more than 1.5-2L within a 24-hour period. A HOS is more commonly seen when the stoma is newly formed and will often settle as your body adjusts. However, in a small number of cases it can persist and require longer term management.

Risks associated with a high output stoma

As a result of a high stoma output, your body is not able to absorb fluid and electrolytes (salts) as efficiently from your digestive system. This can lead to severe dehydration and a disturbance in electrolyte levels.

You may experience:

- Thirst and dehydration
- Weight loss and malnutrition due to fluid loss and poor absorption of nutrients from food
- Lethargy
- Stoma bag leakage and discomfort
- Headache and dizziness
- Passing less urine which can be darker and strong smelling

Reducing your stoma output

There are many factors that affect stoma output, however there are some steps you can take which may help you to reduce the volume:

- Drinking less ordinary fluid and replacing this with an oral rehydration solution such as 'Double strength Dioralyte' or St Mark's Solution. Fruit juice, squash, fizzy drinks, water, tea, and coffee are examples of ordinary fluid.
- Increasing salt intake
- Reducing dietary fibre intake
- Taking medication that your doctor may prescribe you to reduce your stoma output.

Fluid and hydration

Though you are normally advised to drink more fluids when dehydrated, in the case of a high output stoma drinking too much ordinary fluid can increase your stoma output further, and make you become more dehydrated than you were.

Your doctor may instead recommend that you restrict these ordinary fluids and drink an oral rehydration solution (sometimes called St Mark's solution or 'double strength Dioralyte').

This drink will help to rehydrate you, replace any electrolytes you may be losing in your output and reduce your stoma output. It is important that you make up the recipe exactly and DO NOT USE substitute ingredients. A small amount of cordial can be added for flavour, and you may find you tolerate it better if it is served chilled.

St. Mark's solution

Six level teaspoons of glucose powder – 20 grams

One level teaspoon of sodium chloride (table salt) – 3.5 grams

Half a heaped teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) – 2.5 grams

These should be mixed into 1000 mls of fresh tap water, chilled and sipped throughout the day.

A small amount of squash can be added to improve flavour.

(Diarolyt can be found your local pharmacy or supermarket.)

'Double strength' Dioralyte

Two sachets of Dioralyte in 200 mls of water

This may be prescribed three to five times per day, sipped slowly.

Tip: Avoid drinking fluids around mealtimes, separate food and fluids by 30 minutes.

Dietary advice

The following tips contain advice that will help you to maximise the amount of nutrients you can absorb from your food and reduce the output of your stoma.

- Chewing food well and avoiding rushing meals
- Eating smaller, but more frequent meals to reduce bloating
- Avoiding spicy foods, fruit juices and alcohol as these increase stoma output.
- Consider limiting your caffeine intake or switching to decaffeinated beverages.
- Adding one to two small snacks between your main meals to increase the amount of nutrients you can get in a day
- Avoid eating and drinking at the same time
- Adding salt to food (half to one teaspoon per day) if directed by your doctor or dietitian
- Following a low fibre diet eg avoiding wholemeal and wholegrain products, brown rice, stringy fruit and vegetables eg celery, pineapple, lettuce, pithy fruit, dried fruit, seeds and nuts. Your dietitian will be able to advise you on this in more detail.

Prevention of weight loss and muscle wasting

A high output stoma can also lead to weight loss and muscle wasting as the remaining bowel may not be able to digest and absorb the nutrients you take in. If this happens, you can make the following adjustments to your diet to maximise the amount of nutrients you consume:

- Use full fat dairy products eg full fat milk and yoghurts
- Add butter, margarine, mayonnaise to sandwiches / potatoes
- Include fried foods and those in batter to your diet
- Add cream, cheese or milk powder to stews and soups
- You should aim for three portions of protein per day, which include: fish, meat, eggs, tofu, cheese, poultry, Quorn, small amount of beans / lentils
- Add two to four tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to each pint of full fat milk (fortified milk)
- Include puddings at meals times as a dessert
- Add sugar, honey, syrup or yoghurt to breakfast cereals.

Medication

Your doctor may also advise you to take certain medications to help manage your stoma output (e.g. loperamide or codeine phosphate). These must be taken with a meal or no more than 30 minutes before. Your doctor will advise you on the dose.

Some medications may pass whole into your stoma bag. Please ensure that you tell your doctor if you experience this.

You may also be advised to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement daily.

Meal and Snack Ideas

- Fried bacon and egg sandwich on white bread with butter or margarine
- Cornflakes or rice krispies with milk and yoghurt
- 3-4 slices of white buttered toast or crumpets with seedless jam, marmalade, honey or marmite
- Cooked breakfast with bacon, sausages and egg
- Scrambled egg made with milk and butter / margarine on buttered white toast
- Croissants with ham and cheese
- Cheese / ham / tuna mayo / sausage / egg sandwich on white bread with butter / margarine, crisps and a chocolate bar
- Pizza and garlic bread
- Jacket potato with filling (leave the skin) and crisps
- Quiche
- Pasta salad with creamy sauce or mayonnaise
- Roasted meats or poultry including fat and skin, roast potatoes, 2 tablespoons of carrots or roast parsnips
- Stews made with root vegetables, meat, potatoes and added cream
- Burgers / fish and chips
- Spaghetti bolognese with cheese and garlic bread
- Toad in the hole with mashed potato made with fortified milk and butter/margarine and gravy
- Fish in sauce with mashed potato and two tablespoons of broccoli or cauliflower heads
- Takeaways or ready meals
- Mild creamy curries with white rice, naan bread and poppadoms
- Pasta carbonara

Puddings

- Sponge puddings and custard
- Cheesecake
- Doughnuts
- Full fat yoghurts or rice puddings
- Scones with butter, cream and seedless jam
- Ice cream

Snacks

- Cheese on toast or cream crackers
- Sausage rolls
- Pork pies
- Crisps
- Chocolate (avoid those with nuts or dried fruit)
- Bread sticks or pitta bread with dips