



Low Residue Diet and IBD

Patient Information Sheet

If you or a loved one have been diagnosed with an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) -- like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, your doctor may suggest you follow a low-residue diet (as used in diverticular disease). A low-residue diet involves eating more easily digestible foods. A low-residue diet may reduce symptoms of IBD, such as diarrhoea and stomach cramping; however, it will not cure IBD.

What Is a Low-Residue Diet?

A low-residue diet is a diet in which insoluble fibre and other foods that are harder for your body to digest are restricted. Fibre is made up of material that cannot be completely digested by the body. High-fibre foods include whole-grain breads and cereals, nuts, seeds, and raw or dried fruits.

Residue refers to undigested foods, including fibre, that make up stool. If intestinal walls are inflamed or damaged, digestion and absorption of nutrients and water may be impaired, depending on the location of disease activity.

In some people with Crohn's disease, the small intestine may also become narrowed (strictured). The idea behind a low-residue diet is to reduce the number and size of bowel movements you have each day, thereby lessening painful IBD symptoms such as cramping, diarrhoea, bloating, and gas. However, it does not affect inflammation or the disease itself.

A low-residue diet may be recommended for short-term use during disease flare-ups or following surgery to help with recovery. Your health care provider or nutritionist can help make sure your diet plan is appropriate. In addition to dietary changes, your health care provider or nutritionist may recommend vitamin supplements. Eating a low-residue diet goes against what nutritionists teach as a healthy dietary intake because it reduces down the (insoluble) fibre intake.

Low-Residue Diet: Foods to Enjoy

Grains

- Refined or enriched white breads and plain crackers, such as saltines or Melba toast (no seeds).
- Cooked cereals, such as farina, cream of wheat, and grits.
- Cold cereals, such as puffed rice and corn flakes.
- White rice, noodles, and refined pasta.

Fruits and Vegetables

The skin and seeds of many fruits and vegetables are loaded with fibre, so peeling skin and avoiding seeds is part of a low-residue diet. The following vegetables can be eaten on a low-residue diet:

Well cooked fresh vegetables or canned vegetables without seeds, such as asparagus tips, beets, green beans, carrots, mushrooms, spinach, squash (no seeds), and pumpkin.

- Cooked potatoes without skin.
- Tomato sauce (no seeds).
- Ripe bananas
- Honeydew
- Canned or cooked fruits without seeds or skin, such as applesauce or canned pears
- Avocado

Milk and Dairy

Milk products are okay to eat, in moderation. Milk does not contain fibre but it may trigger symptoms such as diarrhoea and cramping for some people with lactose intolerance. Alternatively, using lactase supplements or eating lactose-free products may be options.

Meats and Protein

You can enjoy most meats, including beef, lamb, chicken, fish (no bones), and pork as long as they are lean, tender, and soft. Eggs are also okay to eat.

Fats, Sauces, and Condiments

All of the following condiments are fine to eat on a low-residue diet:

- Margarine, butter, and oils
- Mayonnaise and ketchup
- Sour cream
- Smooth sauces and salad dressing
- Soy sauce
- Clear jelly, honey, and syrup

Sweets and Snacks

You can still satisfy your sweet tooth on a low-residue diet. The following desserts and snacks are okay to eat, in moderation:

- Plain cakes and cookies
- Gelatin, plain puddings, custard, and sherbet
- Ice cream and popsicles
- Hard candy
- Pretzels
- Vanilla wafers

Drinks

Safe drinks to enjoy on a low-residue diet include:

- Decaffeinated coffee, tea, and carbonated beverages (caffeine can irritate the stomach)
- Milk
- Juices made without seeds or pulp, such as apple juice, no-pulp orange juice, and cranberry juice
- Strained vegetable juices

If your condition requires you to stay on a low-residue diet over a long period of time, talk to a registered dietitian or nutrition expert to make sure you are getting all the nutrients you need to stay healthy. You may need to supplement your diet with vitamins and minerals.