

Low residue diet

Why follow a low residue diet?

A low residue diet is recommended when people need to avoid foods that may irritate an inflamed bowel or obstruct narrowed parts of the bowel.

What is residue?

Residue is the fibrous part of food that is not fully digested by the body. It is found in high fibre foods, such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals, and also in most fruit and vegetables. A low residue diet may be recommended when experiencing diarrhoea, caused by a flare up of inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, or as a result of pelvic radiotherapy.

It may also be advised to ease the passage of stools through the bowel when there is an obstruction or stricture which may be caused by inflammatory bowel disease, diverticular disease and bowel cancer

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How long will I be on the diet?

A low residue diet is usually only needed for a short period of time, until the affected bowel has settled down and your symptoms are better. However, there are sometimes occasions when a low residue diet may be needed permanently or for a longer length of time. This could be the case if the doctors suspect or have confirmed that you have a stricture or obstruction of your bowel. Your doctor will advise you on when you can return to a normal diet.

How will I need to change my diet?

You should still have regular, well-balanced meals but choose your foods from the **LOW FIBRE/RESIDUE** options

Steps that you can take

- Aim to have small, frequent meals throughout the day rather than one or two large meals, especially if your appetite has been poor.
- Have balanced meals. Choose a variety of foods from the low fibre food choices. You need foods from all of the food groups on the eatwell plate (see figure below).
- Cooking, chopping or blending food **does not** change the fibre content. Peeling and removing seeds or pith **does** lower the fibre content.
- Some of the low fibre food may not agree with you. If a food makes your symptoms worse, do not eat it for a while until you feel better.

Foods to include and foods to avoid

Fibre is mainly found in whole grains, fruit and vegetables. Consider the following food groups:

Cereals

- **LOW FIBRE** All 'white' cereals e.g. Cornflakes, Frosties, Rice Krispies, Ricicles, Special K, Sugar Puffs, Ready Brek, porridge, Coco Pops, millet flakes.
- **HIGH FIBRE** Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, muesli, All Bran, porridge with added bran or nuts.

Bread

- **LOW FIBRE** White or oatmeal bread, white rolls and plain buns including white bagels, biscuits, English muffins, waffles, pancakes, pita, flour tortilla, plain chapatti and poppadoms.
- **HIGH FIBRE** Wholegrain bread and those containing, bran, rye, nuts, seeds or dried fruits, including wholemeal, granary, high fibre, and currant or malt bread. Fruit muffins, scones and pastries.

Biscuits

- **LOW FIBRE** All plain or cream biscuits - Morning Coffee, Rich Tea, custard creams, wafers.
- **HIGH FIBRE** Digestives or wholemeal crackers. Biscuits containing fruit or nuts e.g. Garibaldi, nut cookies, flapjacks.

Other grain products

- **LOW FIBRE** White rice, white and green pasta - spaghetti or lasagne, chow mein noodles, rice noodles. White millet flour.
- **HIGH FIBRE** Wheat bran, barley, whole wheat pasta, popcorn, wholemeal and brown pasta, wholemeal flour, brown rice and couscous.

Vegetables

- **LOW FIBRE** Eat flesh only (no seeds, peel, pith or stalks). Can include potatoes well boiled and mashed. Soft – well cooked ‘pulpy’ vegetables including mashed, pureed and creamed varieties such as mashed potato or mashed sweet potato, pureed squash or pureed swede. Sieved tomato sauces including passata and tomato puree. Smooth or sieved soup. Strained vegetable juices.
- **HIGH FIBRE** All vegetable seeds, peel, pith or stalks. Avoid raw or cooked ‘stringy’ vegetables including, cabbage, curly kale, celery, cucumber, fennel, leeks, okra, peppers, peas, pumpkin, spinach, sprouts and sweetcorn. Avoid large portions of raw salad at same meal. Pulses including baked beans, butter beans, kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils. Soup with pieces e.g. minestrone. Vegetable juices with pulp.

Fruit

- **LOW FIBRE** Eat flesh only (no seeds, peel, pith or stalks). Can include tinned apricots, peaches and pears. Ripe fresh fruit without skins or seeds

such as peeled apple or pear. All fruit juices and fruit-flavoured drinks without pulp.

- **HIGH FIBRE** All fruit seeds, peel, pith, stones or stalks, including all citrus fruits - oranges, grapefruit, lemons. Kiwi, raspberries and strawberries as they contain seeds. Pineapple and other 'stringy fruits' e.g. mango. All dried fruit. Smoothies, all fruit juices with pulp and prune juice.

Meat, fish and alternatives

- **LOW RESIDUE** All tender lean meat e.g. beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, corned beef, ham, gammon, bacon, liver, kidney, veal and rabbit. Fish e.g. cod, haddock, plaice and salmon. They can be grilled, baked, poached or steamed. Eggs and tofu.
- **HIGH RESIDUE** Grisly, tough or fatty meats and tough skin including meat pies, pasties, sausages and crackling. Fish with lots of small bones e.g. pilchards.

Milk and milk products

- **LOW RESIDUE** All types of milk, cream, sour cream, crème fraiche, fromage frais, smooth yoghurt, butter, margarine and cheese.
- **HIGH RESIDUE** Any milk product containing fruits, nuts, seeds or cereals, including yoghurt, cheese with added fruit or nuts.

Sweets and puddings

- **LOW RESIDUE** Custard, ice cream, milk puddings, clear jelly, smooth coconut milk, frozen yoghurt. All plain cakes e.g. Madeira cakes, Victoria sponge and iced buns. Hard candy, plain/milk/white chocolate, toffee, fudge, mints, fruit gums, pastilles, jelly sweets and marshmallows.
- **HIGH RESIDUE** Ice cream containing fruit and nuts. Any cakes, puddings and pies, including any of the following ingredients: wholemeal flour, dried fruit, nuts, dried coconut and any fruits that should be avoided. Chocolate with dried fruit, nuts or seeds.

Drinks

- **SAFE** Water, soft drinks, mint or herbal tea. Caffeine-free drinks. Alcohol (unless forbidden by doctor).
- **AVOID** Caffeine-containing drinks such as espresso, energy drinks and cola

Miscellaneous

- **SAFE** Oils, salad dressings, ketchup, gravy, soy sauce, pepper, salt, herbs and spices in moderation (dried or finely chopped). Jelly-type jams (e.g. lemon curd), sugar, artificial sweeteners, honey, golden syrup, treacle. Plain pretzels (without sesame seeds), crisps.
- **AVOID** Wholegrain mustard, pickles, relish, houmous, coleslaw, chutney, liquorice root. Jam or marmalade with skin, peel or pips, peanut butter, mincemeat. Popcorn, corn chips. All nuts and seeds including pumpkin, sunflower and sesame seeds.

Useful tips

- Chew food slowly and thoroughly.
- Avoid food that is too hot or too cold.
- Avoid large quantities of caffeine or alcohol as these may worsen your symptoms.
- Avoid fizzy drinks as they may worsen your symptoms.
- Be cautious with ready meals and pre-prepared pizza and pies as they may contain some of the ingredients known to make your symptoms worse.

How do I return to a higher fibre diet?

Once advised by your doctor that you can return to a normal diet, it is best to slowly reintroduce the foods you have avoided back into your diet one at a time and in small amounts. If any particular food does not agree with you, avoid it and introduce it again at a later time.