Dietary advice for people with a colostomy

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because you have had a colostomy formed.

Having a colostomy means that you have had your stoma made out of the large bowel (colon). This means that all the digestive process will have been completed higher up in the small bowel, so there is no special dietary advice.

The main advice is that you should enjoy a healthy balanced diet. This means regular meals including:

- Protein (meat, fish, cheese, eggs)
- Carbohydrates (potatoes, rice, pasta, bread)
- Fibre (fruit, salad and vegetables)
- Smaller portions of dairy products and fats
- Vitamins and minerals (found in all the above foods).

Constipation

It is important to remember that you can still get constipated, even with a colostomy, so it is essential to eat a varied diet, which includes fibre, fruit and vegetables. Drinking plenty of water can also help to avoid this problem, for example 1.5 litres per day, and obviously more in hot weather.

Some people find that their stoma does not pass faeces daily. This may be normal for them.

If you find that your stoma has not acted for 2 days and you are feeling bloated and uncomfortable, increase your exercise, drink more fluid, have an extra glass of orange juice in the morning and eat more fruit and vegetables. It is advisable you eat breakfast.

If your colostomy has not worked for more than 3 days you may need a laxative. Discuss this with your stoma care nurse, GP or with your local pharmacist where you may be able to purchase a laxative over the counter at the chemist.
Wind

We all have to pass wind (flatus) and having a colostomy will mean that you will have no control over when you pass the wind.

Some people suffer from more wind than others which can be very embarrassing. If this is you, it is a good idea to avoid certain foods which are known to cause wind, such as baked beans, green vegetables, cauliflower or onions. Not everyone is affected by the same foods; make a note of what type of foods effect you.

Remember it is not always food that is the cause of the wind. Smoking, snoring, drinking a lot of carbonated drinks and drinking through straws can all contribute to increased air going into the stomach.

It is essential that you eat regularly to avoid a build-up of wind. Some people find eating a small pot of bio yogurt daily or drinking peppermint tea or cordial can help reduce the amount of wind produced.

Alcohol

As with any stoma, you can still enjoy alcoholic beverages, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. It is important to be aware that an excess of beer will produce an excess of wind, due to the hops that are used to make beer, wine and spirits should have no detrimental effect on the bowel motions.

Remember to drink in moderation, and observe the safe limits, NHS recommends that men should not drink more than 3 to 4 units of alcohol per day and women no more than 2 to 3 units of alcohol per day.

Diarrhoea

We can all experience diarrhoea with or without a colostomy. Some common reasons are:

- High fibre, spicy foods and alcohol can increase gut activity. This will lead to a loose stool. Avoid the suspected food or drink for 1 week, then try again later
- Some antibiotics can cause diarrhoea. Please check with your GP who may prescribe you an antidiarrhoeal medication to counteract this.
Recommended advice for diarrhoea

- Advice for stomach upset would be exactly the same as if you did not have a stoma. If the diarrhoea continues for more than 48 hours, seek advice from your GP
- Avoid high fibre foods (such as fruit, salad, green vegetables) until the diarrhoea has settled. Eat more carbohydrates (potatoes, pasta, rice) and protein (meat, fish, cheese, egg)
- It is very important to drink plenty to avoid becoming dehydrated. ie. minimum of 8 cups per day.

It is recommended during hot weather or during exercise, additional fluids should be drunk to prevent dehydration. Isotonic fluids are better for you because of a higher salt content and combination of sugars. It encourages fluid to be absorbed into the gut, rather than passing straight through into your stoma bag. These types of drinks include rehydration salts and isotonic fluids, which can be bought from supermarkets and chemists.

Stool thickeners

If you find that the output from the stoma is quite liquid, some foods are excellent at thickening the output naturally. These include bananas, pasta, rice, white bread, jelly based foods, such as marshmallows, jelly babies.

Contact information

If you have any particular concerns regarding stoma care, the nurse can be contacted on:

Stoma Care
Gloucester Royal Hospital
Tel: 0300 422 6702

Cheltenham General Hospital
Tel: 0300 422 4363

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 4:00pm (excluding Bank Holidays)

If your call is not answered, please leave your name, contact details and a brief message; your query will be dealt with the next working day or at the first opportunity.
Further information

Colostomy Association
Enterprise House
95 London Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 4QA
Tel: 0118 939 1537
Help line: 0800 328 4257
Website: www.colostomyassociation.org.uk

Content reviewed: August 2015