

Gastroparesis Diet

For people who have diabetes

This handout offers diet and nutrition tips for people with gastroparesis, who also have diabetes.

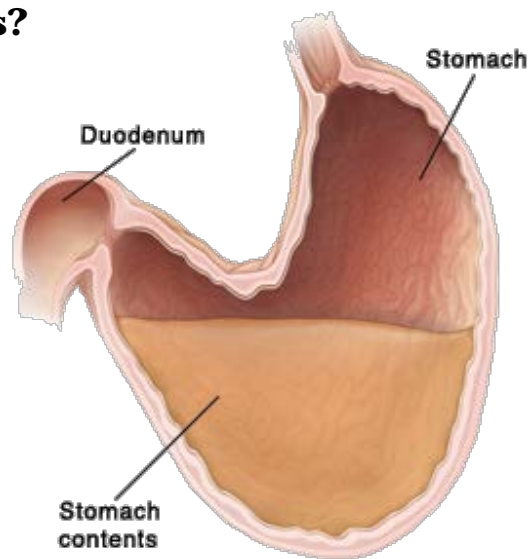
What is gastroparesis?

Gastroparesis is a kind of nerve damage that affects the stomach. “Gastro” means stomach, and “paresis” means *paralysis* (unable to move).

Gastroparesis causes the stomach to empty slowly.

Normal stomach muscles contract slowly and steadily. This motion breaks food down into tiny pieces. The stomach then pushes the semi-liquid food into the small intestine.

When someone has gastroparesis, the nerves that help their stomach muscles contract do not work well. This means that food stays in the stomach much longer than normal and is not digested well.



In gastroparesis, the stomach empties more slowly and food is not digested well.

Common Problems with Gastroparesis

Here are some common problems that people with diabetes may have when they also have gastroparesis:

Blood Glucose Too Low or Too High

It is common for people who have gastroparesis to have low or high blood glucose after eating a meal. This is because the insulin they took before the meal to control their blood glucose is working, but the food they ate is not being digested.

Digestion Problems

Some people with gastroparesis have digestion problems. These may include:

- Bloating.
- Nausea.
- Feeling full after eating only a small amount of food.
- Loss of appetite.
- Heartburn and spitting up, caused when food and acid in the full stomach move back up the *esophagus* (the tube between the throat and the stomach).
- Vomiting after a meal or first thing in the morning. Vomit may include undigested food that was eaten 8 to 24 hours earlier.

Trouble Eating Solid Foods

If you have gastroparesis, it is hard for your stomach to break foods down into smaller pieces. To deal with this problem:

- Try soft foods or liquid meals. People with gastroparesis are often able to digest these foods more easily than solid foods.
- Mash solid foods with a fork. This can make them easier to digest. Some foods that are easy to mash are peeled potatoes, ripe pears and peaches without skin, boiled eggs, and minced meats.
- Avoid these foods, since they are harder to digest:
 - Tough meats such as hamburger and steak
 - Foods with peels, husks, or membranes
 - Stringy foods
 - Seeds and grains
- Use a blender to grind your food into smaller pieces. If needed, add liquids such as broth, milk, juice, or water to solid foods for easier blending. A hand-held blender works well for most food and is easy to clean. Warm foods are often easier to blend than cold foods.

Eat Smaller Meals

- Eating smaller meals and snacks may help your stomach empty faster.
- Try to eat 4 to 6 small meals a day, instead of 3 larger meals.

Change Your Eating and Lifestyle Habits

- Eat slowly. Allow 30 minutes for eating a meal. Take small bites and chew food well before swallowing.
- Drink fluids with your meals.
- For 1 to 2 hours after meals, sit upright or walk.
- Raise the head of your bed so that it is 6 to 8 inches higher than the foot of the bed.

Avoid Fatty Foods

Foods that contain a lot of fat can make food stay in your stomach longer. Eating lower-fat foods will help your stomach empty more quickly.

To help your digestion, **avoid** these foods:

- Deep-fat fried foods such as French fries, fried chicken, fried fish, and tempura
- Sauces made with cream and cheese
- Fast food such as burgers, pizza, chicken wings, and foods served with guacamole, cheese, and sour cream
- High-fat meats such as sausage, hamburger, steak, or bacon

Eat Foods That Are Low in Fiber

When you have gastroparesis, fiber can make your stomach empty **more slowly**. When fiber-rich foods stay in your stomach too long, they can bind together. This slows the movement of food and may cause a block in your stomach.

Avoid high-fiber foods such as:

- Fresh fruits such as berries, oranges, and apples
- Raw vegetables and lettuce salads
- Cooked high-fiber vegetables such as Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, sauerkraut, and potato skins
- Whole grains such as breads with seeds and nuts, bran cereals, and brown rice
- Dried beans and legumes
- Snack foods such as nuts and popcorn

If you take fiber supplements such as Metamucil to treat constipation, talk with your healthcare provider. You may need to stop taking these products.

Take a Multivitamin and Mineral Supplement

Taking a nutritional supplement will help if your diet is low in fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. If you cannot eat solid foods, try using a liquid supplement.

If You Need to Gain Weight

- Try foods such as instant breakfasts, milkshakes, yogurt, pudding, custard, hot cereal, and smoothies.
- Drink supplements or meal replacement products that are low in fiber and high in vitamins and minerals. Some of these are Ensure, Boost, Enlive, Glucerna, and Slim-Fast.
- Try baby foods. Pureed meats add protein to your diet. Pureed vegetables and fruits add nutrition and variety to your meals.
- High-fat food may delay the emptying of your stomach, but you may be able to digest liquids that contain fat. Some of these are milkshakes, custard, or pudding made with whole milk.

More Tips

- Ask your healthcare provider if any medicines you are taking might be causing your stomach to empty more slowly.
- If you are having low blood glucose, use low-fat foods and drinks to raise your blood glucose most quickly. Try glucose tablets, juice, regular soda pop, sports drinks, or hard candy.
- Sugar-free foods made with sugar alcohols (sorbitol or xylitol) may cause gas and bloating. They may worsen your symptoms.
- Sometimes, people with gastroparesis need tube feedings to meet their nutritional needs. Tube feedings deliver fluids and nutrients directly into your small intestine, where your body can process them.

For Best Long-term Results

- It is important to have good blood glucose control. Check your blood glucose levels often and adjust your insulin as needed.
- Keep your blood glucose levels in good control to help your stomach work its best.
- Talk with your diabetes care provider if your blood glucose is often higher than 200 mg/dL.

Sample Meal Plan

Here is a sample meal plan for 1 day, using 6 small meals:

Breakfast

- 1 cup Cream of Wheat cereal, other low-fiber hot cereal, Cheerios, or Rice Krispies
 - ½ cup skim or 1% milk
 - ½ cup canned peaches or pears – unsweetened, packed in juice
 - 1 egg, scrambled, hard boiled, or poached
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Morning Snack

- Instant breakfast with skim or 1% milk or 1 can Slim-Fast, Ensure, or Boost
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Lunch

- ½ cup vegetable soup
 - ½ turkey or creamy peanut butter sandwich on fine-grain wheat or white bread, with 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
 - ½ cup applesauce
 - ½ cup skim or 1% milk
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Afternoon Snack

- 8-ounce fruit smoothie, ½ cup sugar-free pudding, or ½ cup low-fat or fat-free yogurt
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Dinner

- 2 to 3 ounces baked, braised, or poached chicken or fish (**not** fried)
 - 1 cup mashed potatoes, rice, or pasta
 - 1 teaspoon margarine
 - ½ cup cooked carrots or other cooked low-fiber vegetable
 - ½ cup skim or 1% milk
 - ½ cup fruit cocktail
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Evening Snack

- ½ cup sugar-free pudding or low-fat or fat-free yogurt
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Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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