Gastroparesis

Diet and nutrition suggestions for people with diabetes

What is gastroparesis?

_Gastroparesis_ is a kind of nerve damage that affects the stomach. “Gastro” means stomach, and “paresis” means paralysis. Gastroparesis causes the stomach to empty slowly.

Normal stomach muscles provide slow, steady contractions to break down food into tiny pieces. The stomach then pushes this "mulch" into the small intestine.

In gastroparesis, the nerves in the stomach that control this movement of food do not work properly. Food stays in the stomach much longer than normal and is not digested properly.

Common Symptoms of Gastroparesis

**Blood Glucose Too High or Too Low**

Some people with gastroparesis have low 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. There is a mismatch of food and insulin, and the result is low blood glucose.

**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)
- Vomiting after a meal or first thing in the morning (vomit may include undigested food eaten 8 to 24 hours earlier)
If You Are Having Trouble Eating Solid Foods

Here are some things to try if you are not able to eat solid foods:

- Try soft foods or liquid meals to help you meet your nutritional needs. People with gastroparesis are often able to digest these foods more easily than solid foods.
- Try foods such as instant breakfasts, milkshakes, yogurt, pudding, custard, hot cereal, and smoothies.
- Puree your food. Use a blender to add liquids such as broth, milk, juice, or water to solid foods. A hand-held blender can quickly blenderize almost any food and is easy to clean. Warm foods are usually easier to puree than cold foods.
- Drink prepared supplement products (or meal replacements) 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 will add protein to your diet. The many types of pureed vegetables and fruits can add variety to your meals.
- If you are having trouble getting enough calories and you can digest them well, try high-fat liquids. Two of these are whole milk and milkshakes.

Tips to Help Your Digestion

*Eat smaller meals, more often:*

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

*Try these eating habits:*

- Chew food well before swallowing. Solid food in the stomach does not empty well.
- Drink fluids with your meals.
- For 1 to 2 hours after meals, sit upright or walk.

*Avoid foods that may increase digestion problems:*

- Fat can make food stay in your stomach longer. Eating low-fat solid foods will help your stomach empty more quickly.
- Avoid foods that can be hard to digest. Some of these are lettuce, corn, seeds, nuts, and popcorn.
- Avoid tough meats, such as hamburger and steak.
Avoid high-fat 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 Mexican foods served with guacamole, cheese, and sour cream
- High-fat meats such as sausage, hamburger, steak, or bacon

Eat a diet low in fiber:
- Fiber can make your stomach empty more slowly. Fiber-rich foods that stay in your stomach too long can bind together. This slows the movement of food and may cause a blockage in your stomach.
- Avoid high-fiber foods such as:
  - Dried beans and legumes
  - Fresh fruits such as berries, oranges, and apples
  - Many cooked 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
- If you take fiber supplements to treat constipation, talk with your health care provider. You may need to stop taking fiber supplements such as Metamucil.

Take a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement:
- Taking a nutritional supplement will help if your diet is low in fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.
- If you are not able to eat solid foods, try using a liquid multivitamin and mineral supplement.

More Tips
- Ask your health care provider if any medicines you are taking might be slowing down the emptying of your stomach.
- If you are having low blood glucose, use low-fat foods and drinks to bring your blood glucose up as quickly as possible. Try glucose tablets, juice, regular soda pop, sports drinks, or hard candy.
- Sometimes, people with gastroparesis need tube feedings to meet their nutritional needs. Tube feedings deliver fluids and nutrients directly into the small intestine, where your body can process them.
Questions?

Call 206-598-4882

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Diabetes Care Center: 206-598-4882

Managing Gastroparesis and Diabetes Long-term

- It is important to have good blood glucose control. Check your blood glucose levels often and adjust your insulin as needed.
- Keeping your blood glucose levels in good control may also help your stomach empty more quickly.
- Talk with your health care provider if your blood glucose is often higher than 200 mg/dL.

Sample Diet: 6 Small Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Snack</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup Cream of Wheat cereal, other low-fiber hot cereal, Cheerios, or Rice Krispies</td>
<td>8-ounce fruit smoothie, ½ cup sugar-free pudding, or ½ cup lite yogurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup skim or 1% milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup canned peaches or pears – unsweetened, packed in juice</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 egg, scrambled, hard boiled, or poached</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instant breakfast with skim or 1% milk or 1 can Slim-Fast, Ensure, or Boost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup vegetable soup</td>
<td>½ cup sugar-free pudding or lite yogurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ turkey or creamy peanut butter sandwich on fine-grain wheat or white bread</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup applesauce</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup skim or 1% milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tablespoon light mayonnaise</td>
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