

Limited Fiber Diet

After surgery

This handout explains a low-fiber diet for patients after surgery.

You may be asked to make short-term changes to your diet after your surgery. These changes can help your body heal and reduce symptoms like nausea, gas, bloating, feelings of fullness, and abdominal cramping.

What is a limited fiber diet?

A limited fiber diet contains less dietary fiber than a normal healthy diet. Fiber is the part of a plant the body does not digest. It is also called *roughage*, and is an important part of a healthy diet.

There are 2 types of fiber:

- *Insoluble* fiber helps your food digest faster. Insoluble fiber is found in whole grains, nuts, seeds, berries, and some vegetables.
- *Soluble* fiber absorbs fluid in your digestive track and thickens stool. Soluble fiber is found in yams, potatoes, winter squash, beets, and some fruits.

How long do I need to be on the diet?

Each person is unique. Your healthcare team will work with you to decide how long you need to follow the diet.

How do I follow the diet?

- **Eat smaller meals more often.** Try to eat every 2 to 4 hours instead of 3 large meals per day.
- **Add protein foods to each meal and snack.** Protein helps repair cells. It can help your body heal after surgery and build muscle during treatment.



To help your body heal after surgery, add protein to each meal and snack.

Questions?

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

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Choose lean protein foods like poultry without skin, fish, eggs, tofu, whey protein powders, and low-fat dairy products like cottage cheese and yogurt.

- **Avoid high-fiber foods.** Limit your total fiber to less than 10 grams a day.
- **Chew!** Digestion will be easier on your stomach when you chew your food well. Chewing helps your body absorb nutrients, and it can help prevent a blockage or obstruction in your bowels.
- **Call your healthcare provider if you have any changes in your bowel, such as constipation, nausea or vomiting, or pain.**

Sample Low-Fiber Menu

Breakfast

Day 1

1 to 2 scrambled eggs with cooked mushrooms
1 slice toast (less than 2 grams fiber per slice)
1 teaspoon butter
½ cup applesauce

Day 2

1 cup cooked oatmeal
1 teaspoon butter
1 banana
6 ounces milk

Lunch

Day 1

½ cup plain tuna salad (prepared with mayonnaise)
6 crackers (less than 2 grams fiber per serving, and no seeds)
⅛ avocado, sliced
½ cup applesauce

Day 2

Chicken noodle soup with broth, chicken pieces, and egg noodles
6 crackers (less than 2 grams fiber per serving, and no seeds)

Dinner

Day 1

2 to 4 ounces grilled, skinless chicken
½ cup mashed potatoes, without skin
½ cup tender, cooked green beans
1 teaspoon butter

Day 2

3 to 4 ounces salmon
½ cup white rice
1 cup broccoli tips (steamed)
Herbal tea

Food Suggestions for Home

Food Group	OK to Eat	Limit or Avoid
Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-cooked, lean, tender fish, meat, poultry, or tofu (broiled, steamed, poached or baked) Creamy peanut or other nut butters Eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-fat meats, fried meats, meat with casing (sausage, hot dogs) Nuts, seeds Crunchy peanut or other nut butters Beans, lentils, legumes
Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cream of Rice, Cream of Wheat, grits or instant oatmeal Dry cereals: Cheerios, Just Right, Puffed Wheat, Rice Krispies, Special K, cornflakes, or others with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving Breads with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving Plain bagel or dinner roll without seeds, English muffin, tortilla, white bread Pasta White rice Saltines or other low-fiber crackers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cereal with nuts, raisins, seeds, coconut, or other dried fruit Whole wheat cereal or cereal with 3 grams of fiber or more per serving Whole or multigrain bread Bread with raisins, nuts, coconut, or other dried fruit Whole grain pasta Whole grain crackers Brown rice Barley Popcorn
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-cooked green beans, broccoli tips, and asparagus Peeled and cooked carrots, beets, and acorn squash Mushrooms Tomato sauce Most other well-cooked vegetables without seeds or skins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw vegetables Cooked vegetables with large seeds like tomatoes, zucchini, or cucumber Corn Potato skins
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bananas Avocado Mangos Cooked or canned fruit such as applesauce, peaches, pears, and other fruit without skin or seeds (packed in juice or water, not syrup) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All raw, fresh fruit except banana, avocado, and mango Dried fruit (raisins, prunes, apricots) Canned fruit with skins or seeds
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, other cheeses as tolerated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit-flavored yogurt with seeds or berries
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broths Strained soups Rice, almond, or coconut milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foods or fluids with caffeine Alcohol Spicy foods

Information in this handout is adapted from "Limited Fiber" by Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, 2015.