

## Low fibre / low residue diet

Dietetic service

### Other formats

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You may have been advised to follow a low residue diet if you need to avoid foods that may irritate your bowels or if they are inflamed or obstructed.

### Why follow a low residue diet?

A low residue diet may have been recommended for the following reasons:

- If you are having an active flare up of inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, causing you diarrhoea.
- If there is narrowing or kinking of your bowel, which may become blocked with high fibre foods.
- In preparation for investigatory bowel procedures.
- If you have a high output stoma.

### What is a low residue diet?

The terms 'fibre' and 'residue' are often used interchangeably, but technically they are not the same.

- **Fibre** is the indigestible part of plants that can increase stool output.
- **Residue** includes fibre and any other foods that may increase stool output, such as fatty foods and some meat and dairy products that are not easily digested.

A low residue diet will reduce your consumption of the types of foods that stimulate/irritate the intestine and are undigested when they reach the bowel. A low residue diet may only be temporary and fibre/residue could be re-introduced with the advice of a dietitian.

## Types of fibre

There are two main types of fibre:

- **Soluble fibre** dissolves in water and forms a gel-like substance with water in our stomach. This can slow down how quickly food empties from our stomach, helping to form soft but formed stools.
- **Insoluble fibre** cannot dissolve in water and passes through our digestive system very much unchanged. Insoluble fibre provides the bulking of stools and increases the speed in which it passes through the colon.

Both types of fibre are fermented in the large intestine (bowel) by 'good bacteria'. This fermentation leads to the production of gases, which can sometimes lead to wind. This is very normal. Sometimes the wind can become excessive and also cause bloating in some people, which can be very uncomfortable.

## Food labels: fibre

- To be classed as a 'source of fibre', a food must contain at least 3g of fibre per 100g.
- To be classed as a 'high fibre' food, it must contain at least 6g of fibre per 100g.

**On a low fibre/residue diet, avoid foods containing 3g or more of fibre per 100g.**

## General advice/handy hints

- Eat smaller meals regularly throughout the day and chew food well.
- Avoid chargrilled/blackened foods, especially meats, as these tend to be fibrous and less easily digested.
- Avoid tough, chewy meats.
- Avoid foods that are very spicy as these may exacerbate your symptoms.
- Avoid foods at extreme temperatures – too hot or too cold.
- Avoid large volumes of fizzy, caffeinated or alcoholic drinks as these may aggravate your symptoms.
- When introducing new foods to your diet, do so one at a time to make it easier to recognise foods that may worsen your symptoms.
- Keeping a food and symptom diary may be helpful to keep track of foods that worsen your symptoms.
- Drink plenty of fluids – at least eight glasses per day.
- Your dietitian can advise you about reintroducing fibre to your diet.

The table below lists the foods you should choose and foods to avoid whilst on a low residue diet.

Type of food	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Bread, cereals, starches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- White bread/rolls</li> <li>- White naan</li> <li>- Plain tortilla wraps</li> <li>- White pita bread</li> <li>- Plain bagels</li> <li>- White French stick</li> <li>- Crumpets</li> <li>- Chapatti</li> <li>- English muffins</li>   <li>- Refined cereals e.g. corn flakes, Rice Krispies, honey wheat puffs</li>   <li>- White flour</li> <li>- Corn flour</li> <li>- White chapatti flour</li> <li>- Polenta</li>   <li>- White pasta</li> <li>- White/arborio rice</li> <li>- Noodles</li> <li>- Sago/tapioca</li> <li>- Couscous</li>   <li>- White pizza bases</li> <li>- Low fat pastries</li>   <li>- Cream crackers</li> <li>- Breadsticks</li> <li>- White crispbreads</li> <li>- Rice cakes</li> <li>- Plain biscuits e.g. rich tea, shortbread, nice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wholemeal, brown or granary bread/rolls</li> <li>- 50/50 bread</li> <li>- High fibre white bread</li> <li>- Seeded white bread</li> <li>- Fruit bagels</li> <li>- Fruited teacakes</li> <li>- Wholemeal naan</li>   <li>- Cereals with fruits and nuts e.g. muesli, Special K</li> <li>- Porridge/Ready Brek</li> <li>- Wholegrain cereals e.g. Weetabix, Bran flakes</li>   <li>- Wholemeal/brown flour</li> <li>- Rye/spelt/gram flour</li> <li>- Soya flour</li> <li>- Wheatgerm</li> <li>- Brown chapatti flour</li>   <li>- Brown/wild rice</li> <li>- Wholemeal pasta</li> <li>- Quinoa</li>   <li>- Wholemeal pizza bases</li> <li>- Wholemeal pastry</li>   <li>- Wholemeal crackers</li> <li>- Rye and wholemeal crispbreads (Ryvitas)</li> <li>- Oatcakes</li> <li>- Wholemeal biscuits e.g. digestives, Hobnobs</li> <li>- Biscuits with added fruit and nuts e.g. fig rolls</li> </ul>

Type of food	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Desserts and cakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plain sponge cakes/puddings e.g. Victoria sponge, treacle pudding</li> <li>- Plain scones</li> <li>- Blancmange/jelly</li> <li>- Meringue</li> <li>- Plain pancakes</li> <li>- Mousse</li> <li>- Custard/rice pudding</li> <li>- Ice-cream</li> <li>- Doughnuts</li> <li>- Plain flour crumble with stewed and peeled fruit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sponge cakes with added fruit/nuts</li> <li>- Christmas pudding</li> <li>- Mince pies</li> <li>- Fruit/wholemeal scones</li> <li>- Hot cross buns</li> <li>- Milk-based desserts with added fruit/nuts</li> <li>- Chia pudding</li> <li>- Dried fruit/coconut</li> <li>- Nuts</li> </ul>
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All types of milk including dairy alternatives</li> <li>- Smooth yoghurts (no bits)</li> <li>- Probiotic drinks and yoghurts e.g. Yakult, Actimel</li> <li>- All cheese including paneer and halloumi (low fat options preferable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yoghurts with added fruits/nuts/cereal/seeds</li> <li>- Cream or cheese with added fruit or nut</li> <li>- Tough stringy cheeses e.g. cheese on toast/melted mozzarella</li> </ul>
Meat, fish and meat alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lean beef and lamb, pork without fat</li> <li>- Poultry without skin</li> <li>- Liver</li> <li>- Fish without skin and bones</li> <li>- Meat and fish in breadcrumbs (not wholemeal).</li> <li>- Meat should be cooked until tender</li> <li>- Tofu</li> <li>- Soya mince</li> <li>- Eggs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tough/chewy meats, fatty meats e.g. deli salami/chorizo</li> <li>- Fish where the bones cannot be removed e.g. tinned sardines, sushi</li> <li>- Chargrilled meats, meats with gristle e.g. some minced meat products</li> <li>- Quorn products (dietitian to advice)</li> </ul>

Type of food	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Fruits (Max two portions per day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fruits that have no pips/seeds or peel</li> <li>- Canned fruits without peels</li> <li>- Well-cooked fruits</li> <li>- Watermelon – no pips</li> <li>- Ripe bananas</li> <li>- Fruit juices – no bits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fruits containing seeds or peel</li> <li>- Unripe fruits</li> <li>- Berries/figs</li> <li>- Dried fruits (raisins, currants, apricots etc.)</li> <li>- Passion fruit/kiwi</li> <li>- Rhubarb</li> <li>- Pomegranates</li> <li>- Citrus fruits e.g. oranges, tangerines</li> <li>- Prunes/juice</li> <li>- Fruit smoothies</li> </ul>
Vegetables (Max two portions per day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegetables with pips and peel/skin removed</li> <li>- Well-cooked vegetables with skin removed</li> <li>- Sieved vegetables e.g. tomato puree and tomato passata</li> <li>- Vegetable juices with pulp removed</li> <li>- Potatoes (without skin) mashed/boiled/ roasted/jacket</li> <li>- Sweet potato without the skin</li> <li>- Canned vegetables without skins</li> <li>- Mushrooms</li> <li>- Asparagus tips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raw vegetables</li> <li>- Salad vegetables</li> <li>- Skins and seeds in vegetables</li> <li>- Vegetable stalks</li> <li>- Pulses e.g. baked beans, kidney beans, butter beans, lentils, pearl barley</li> <li>- Peas/sweetcorn</li> <li>- Potatoes with skin</li> <li>- Stir fry vegetables</li> <li>- Pickled vegetables</li> <li>- Olives</li> <li>- Chickpeas including falafels and hummus, curries made using lentils</li> </ul>
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Water/squash</li> <li>- Milk, milky drinks e.g. hot chocolate/Horlicks</li> <li>- Weak tea/coffee</li> <li>- Herbal/fruit teas</li> <li>- Smooth fruit and vegetable juices (no bits/pulp)</li> <li>- Alcohol (2-3 units/day, unless advised to avoid)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fruit juices with bits/pulp</li> <li>- Dietitian to advise on caffeine/alcohol intake as some conditions may benefit from restriction</li> </ul>

Type of food	Food to choose	Food to avoid
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sugar</li> <li>- Boiled sweets</li> <li>- Marshmallows</li> <li>- Chocolate without fruit/nuts</li> <li>- Flavourings e.g. vanilla essence</li> <li>- Smooth preserves and spreads e.g. smooth jam, lemon curd, chocolate spread, peanut butter</li> <li>- Yeast extract</li> <li>- Seasonings, spices, herbs (dried/finely chopped)</li> <li>- Stock cubes</li> <li>- Soy/oyster/fish sauce</li> <li>- Vinegar</li> <li>- Gravy</li> <li>- Tomato/brown sauce</li> <li>- Mayonnaise</li> <li>- Smooth mustard</li> <li>- Butter and spread</li> <li>- Clear or smooth/sieved soups</li> <li>- Plain crisps/pretzels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chocolate with fruit/nut/coconut</li> <li>- Jams/preserves with pips/peels</li> <li>- Peanut butter</li> <li>- Fruit and nut mixes</li> <li>- Bombay mix</li> <li>- Wholegrain mustard</li> <li>- Pickles</li> <li>- Coleslaw</li> <li>- Relish</li> <li>- Very spicy/spiced curries/other dishes</li> <li>- Wholegrain crisps/snacks</li> <li>- Popcorn</li> <li>- Corn chips</li> <li>- Soups with chunks</li> </ul>

## Example menu

### Breakfast options:

- Corn flakes/Rice Krispies with milk or dairy alternative, with sliced ripe banana
- White toast with butter/spread and smooth jam
- Poached/scrambled eggs or an omelette with lightly grilled lean bacon

### Lunch/light meal options:

- Clear/smooth/sieved soup with white bread
- White bread sandwich with lean meat / cheese
- Fish without skin or bone, chicken breast, lean cut of meat with white rice/pasta/potatoes and vegetables from permitted list

**Evening meal options:**

- Homemade cottage pie made with lean minced beef and a portion of well-cooked vegetables from permitted list
- White pasta with a passata-based sauce or a creamy sauce with lean meat or meat alternatives
- Lean and tender meat/fish/meat alternative with mashed/boiled potatoes without skin, a well-cooked portion of vegetables and gravy
- Tomato passata and chicken risotto made with white aborio rice

**Dessert options:**

- Steamed sponge pudding (without fruit) with custard
- Yoghurt with stewed skinless fruit/tinned fruit
- Treacle tart and ice cream/custard
- Rice pudding and smooth jam
- Chocolate mousse

**Snack options:**

- Weak tea/coffee
- Plain biscuit/cake
- Piece of fruit (as allowed)
- Glass of smooth fruit juice
- Milk yoghurt or dairy-free alternative without fruit/nuts/granola

**Vitamin and mineral supplements**

If you are following a low residue diet for a long period of time, it may be necessary for you to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement to ensure you are meeting your nutritional requirements. This is because fruits and vegetables are restricted on a low residue diet and these provide a large proportion of our vitamins and minerals in our diet.

Please speak to your dietitian, who can advise you on this, especially if you are not able to tolerate many of the fruits and vegetables allowed.

## Further information

If you have any queries about your diet, please do not hesitate to contact the dietetic team.

Dietetic Department  
North Devon District Hospital  
Barnstaple

Telephone: 01271 322306 (Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm)

## Useful websites

BDA food factsheet on fibre  
[www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/fibrefoodfactsheet.pdf](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/fibrefoodfactsheet.pdf)

Crohn's and Colitis UK  
[www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](http://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk)

NHS living with ulcerative colitis  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/ulcerative-colitis/living-with/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ulcerative-colitis/living-with/)

NHS living with a colostomy  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/colostomy/living-with/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colostomy/living-with/)

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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