

Diet

Crohn's Disease and Colitis



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**Do any foods
cause ulcerative
colitis?**



The role of diet in the onset and treatment of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis is controversial. More and more evidence suggests that it is important and there have been a number of recent changes in treatment. This booklet has been written to give patients up-to-date information on diet and inflammatory bowel disease (i.e. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis).

In 1746 Bonnie Prince Charlie lost the Battle of Culloden and failed in his bid to become king. In the aftermath of the battle he successfully treated a flare-up of his ulcerative colitis by withdrawing milk and milk products. In more recent times milk has been thought to play a part in flare-ups in up to 10% of patients. It is possible that early exposure to cows milk as a baby may play a part in this 'allergy' to milk. Substitution of goats or sheeps milk for cows is of no known benefit. Soya-based milk substitutes have not been investigated but may be of some help; soya 'milk' is prepared from vegetables and is chemically different to milk from animals.

**Should I avoid
foods that upset
me?**



people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are able to eat a normal diet and do not need to avoid high-fibre foods. Recently it was suggested that a high-fibre diet might reduce the chances of a flare-up in both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, but careful studies have not confirmed these experimental findings.

Some people find that certain foods regularly upset them. We do not know why, but they are best avoided. Foods that have been incriminated include peas, nuts, beer, wheat and dairy products.

None of these foods causes either Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis but they may cause abdominal upsets even in people who do not have IBD (Inflammatory Bowel Disease).

Some doctors have developed exclusion diets as a possible treatment for inflammatory bowel disease. Patients are started on a basic exclusion diet and new foods are introduced slowly. If any of these foods cause symptoms they are removed from the diet. Eventually a diet based on a wide range of suitable foods is identified and those foods which provoke symptoms are omitted.

Can diet help if I have a stricture?

Such diets must be worked out with the help of your doctor and dietician. They will ensure that you take a well balanced diet.

If you have a narrowing of the bowel (or stricture) a low residue diet may help prevent symptoms due to obstruction. In this case a high-fibre diet may make your symptoms worse and your doctor or dietician may advise you to avoid foods with a high fibre content.

Can diet help during a flare-up?



Yes, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that resting the bowel can help. This can be done by:

- * Intravenous feeding (parenteral nutrition).
- * Low-residue oral feeding (enteral nutrition).

Intravenous feeding. This is done in hospital. Specially prepared nutritional fluids are dripped into a vein. Great care is needed to prevent infection entering the system.

Low-residue feeding. Two main forms of low-residue feeds are available.

- * *Elemental feeds*, in which the food is in a completely digested form.



What is a healthy diet?

**Low-residue feeds*, in which the food is partly digested and there is no fibre present.

These feeds come as drinks which may be swallowed or given through a soft fine-bore tube passing through the nose into the stomach.

Such feeding can be used for periods of four to six weeks and can be very helpful if you have a stricture or a severely inflamed portion of bowel. Some patients have difficulties in coping with the large volume of fluid needed, which may be as much as 2-3 litres. If this is the case, the fluid may be given overnight or continuously through a fine-bore tube. Such tubes are easy to insert and cause very little discomfort. They can be worn at home, or even to do the shopping or to play sports.

A variety of foods is essential because no one food is perfect! A good combination contains everything needed for health and well-being. By choosing different foods from each group below, you will receive all the nutrients you need each day.

Meat, fish, eggs, pulses and nuts provide protein and B



vitamins which are essential for overall health and the building and repairing of all body tissues. Meat, eggs and pulses also contain iron which is essential for blood production. Have two portions of protein food each day (i.e. lunch and evening meal).

Fruit, salad and vegetables (fresh or frozen) provide a wide range of vitamins and minerals, as well as fibre. Also include some fruit juice in your diet (rich in vitamin C). Vitamins are easily destroyed in cooking, so use only small amounts of water and cook for the minimum time.

Cereals provide energy (calories), protein, B vitamins and fibre. Choose high-fibre varieties:

- High-fibre breakfast cereals, e.g. Weetabix, Branflakes, Sultana Bran
- Wholemeal bread and perhaps wholemeal flour for cooking
- Wholegrain varieties of rice, pasta and spaghetti

Oils and fats provide 'essential' fats, certain vitamins and energy (calories). If you are overweight, take care over quantities of 'visible' fats (butter, margarine, oil and lard) and 'hidden' fats (pastries, pies, confectionery and cakes), as all are high in calories.



Choosing a healthy diet



Milk and dairy products include milk, cheese and yoghurt. These provide calcium, protein, vitamin A and riboflavin. Aim to drink one pint per day or its equivalent (1 oz of cheese or a pot of yoghurt contain as much calcium as a third of a pint of milk). *But remember that milk products may upset you.*

Eating healthily does not mean that you have to stop enjoying your food or feel guilty about occasional treats. It is the foods taken over a period of time that count, not the individual treat taken now and again! Your main aims should be to:

- * *Eat more fibre-rich food*, such as high-fibre cereals, wholemeal bread, fruit, vegetables and salad.
- * *Reduce saturated (animal) fats*. Eat less manufactured meat products (pies and 'fast' foods); use margarines and oils labelled 'high in polyunsaturates' instead of butter and lard; use low-fat dairy products.
- * *Reduce sugar*. Add less sugar to drinks and food and eat less chocolate, sweets and confectionery.



Are there any organisations that can help?



- * *Watch your salt intake.* Add less to food and reduce your intake of processed (tinned/packet) foods.
- * *Ensure that you have regular meals and a good fluid intake **
- * *Drink alcohol in moderation only!*
- * *Maintain your ideal body weight.*

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