

Low-Residue Diet



CCNM
Canadian College of
Naturopathic Medicine

**Integrative
Cancer
Centre**

This is a short-term diet that limits high-fiber foods to give the digestive system a rest after surgery or cancer treatment. When food is digested, the body absorbs nutrients and leaves behind “residue”, as in undigested food. The goal of this diet is to reduce the volume of undigested food passing through the bowels to help reduce stool volume, frequency and digestive symptoms.

How to:

- Initially, limit fibre intake to 10-15 grams per day. Over time, you may be able to increase this
 - Read food labels for fiber content or internet search for food nutritional information
- Avoid raw fruits and vegetables (for the most part)
 - All vegetables should be well cooked and fruits with a softer texture should be emphasized
 - Skins and seeds should be removed prior to cooking.
- Limit high-fiber foods:
 - Vegetables and fruit servings should be around 3-5 per day (serving size being ½ cup cooked)
 - Whole grains (whole grain breads, cereals, and pastas, oatmeal, millet, buckwheat) and try to limit your intake of refined grains (white flour, white rice)
- Limiting fatty foods and oils will be helpful if you are experiencing diarrhea.
- Ensure that you are eating as much variety as possible to ensure adequate nutrition.
- Avoid sweeteners: refined sugar and other substitutes: xylitol, sorbitol, aspartame, sucralose, honey → these can contribute to diarrhea.
- Include a source of protein with each meal to help support tissue repair and regeneration, maintain a healthy energy level and stabilize blood sugar.
- Meal replacement powders can be helpful to ensure that you are getting adequate vitamins and minerals, however ensure that the fibre content is minimal.
- Drinking 1.5-2 liters of water or decaffeinated herbal tea per day and maintaining regular physical activity will help keep bowel movements regular.
- Taking small bites and chewing food well will help improve the digestion of your food.

Food preparation tips:

- Use a food processor, juicer or blender for creative ways to incorporate vegetables or fruits. Blending fruits and vegetables helps break down the fiber, making it easier on your digestive system.
- Use cooking methods that keep foods soft such as simmering, poaching or stewing.

Adding fibre back into your diet:

- Once you experience soft bowel movements that are easy to pass, it is possible to gradually increase higher fibre foods back into your diet. Add a small amount of one new, higher fibre food per day. If you experience any digestive symptoms (diarrhea, cramping, gas), avoid this food and wait until symptoms resolve before re-introducing another type of food. To help the body adjust to the increased fibre quantity, continue drinking 1.5 to 2 liters of water or decaffeinated herbal tea per day.

FOODS ALLOWED ON A LOW RESIDUE DIET

| Food group: | Include: | Avoid: |
|--|--|---|
| Protein | <p>Focus on unprocessed meats: tender, well-cooked, lean skinless meats prepared without added fat (i.e. fish, poultry)</p> <p>Well-cooked eggs i.e. hard-boiled, avoid frying</p> <p>Tofu</p> <p>Smooth nut and seed butters i.e. almond, sunflower</p> | <p>Crunchy nut butters i.e. peanut, almond, hazelnut and all whole nuts and seeds</p> <p>Beans, lentils</p> <p>Fried poultry, fish or other meat</p> <p>High fat meats (ham, roast beef, bologna, salami), sausage, bacon</p> <p>Dairy products</p> |
| Vegetables/complex carbohydrates/legumes | <p>Well-cooked vegetables without seeds or skins</p> <p>Sweet potatoes without skin</p> <p>Vegetable juice extracted without the pulp (consider juicing kale, spinach, cucumber, celery, tomato and flavouring with fresh lemon/lime juice)</p> <p>Zucchini (no seeds)</p> | <p>Raw or fried vegetables</p> <p>Gas forming vegetables including: broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, swiss chard, brussels sprouts, collard greens, cabbage, beets, mustard greens, corn, lima beans, mushrooms, onions, okra</p> <p>Peas</p> |
| Fruits | <p>Soft-textured fruits i.e. ripe bananas, melons, peaches, plums, cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon, avocados, seedless, peeled grapes, oranges (without membrane)</p> <p>Peeled apples or pears, baked or stewed</p> <p>Cooked berries</p> | <p>Fruit juice with pulp</p> <p>Prunes or prune juice</p> <p>All dried fruit</p> <p>Most fresh fruit</p> <p>Canned fruit in heavy syrup</p> |
| Fats and Oils | <p>Small amounts of unsaturated oils i.e. olive oil, avocado oil</p> | <p>Butter, creamy salad dressings, mayonnaise</p> |
| Beverages | <p>Mostly water</p> <p>Rehydration drinks containing electrolytes i.e. coconut water, "Emergen-C" electrolyte packets</p> | <p>Caffeinated tea or coffee, energy drinks</p> <p>Alcoholic drinks</p> <p>Soda and any other sugary drinks</p> |