

Crohn's Disease

What is it?

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory disease of the digestive or gastrointestinal [gas-trow-in-TESS-tin-uhl] (GI) tract. The inflammation can occur anywhere from the mouth to the anus but is most likely to affect the small and large intestines. During periods of inflammation, some people may experience watery diarrhea, abdominal cramping, fever, nausea, vomiting, or intestinal bleeding. Some individuals with Crohn's disease may also experience weight loss as a result of poor appetite, increased nutritional needs, or poor absorption of nutrients. Development of strictures, or areas of narrowing, along the GI tract due to scar tissue build up can also interfere with adequate nutrient consumption.

Can diet help?

A **low residue/low fiber diet** is generally best tolerated during flare-ups. Crohn's disease flare ups, or temporary periods of inflammation, are not caused by eating certain foods. However, many find some foods can make symptoms worse. During these periods, it is important to allow the bowel to rest. It is only recommended to restrict fiber when having flare-up symptoms.

When you are not experiencing symptoms, transitioning to a **high-fiber diet** is recommended. A high-fiber diet can help stimulate normal GI function and strengthen the intestinal walls. A high-fiber diet is also recommended for general good health. Aim for following a high-fiber diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains on a regular basis between flare ups.

Food intolerances

Crohn's disease is not triggered or made worse by specific foods. However, some patients find that specific foods may worsen GI symptoms. Your diet may need to be individualized according to specific food intolerances.

It may be beneficial to keep a food diary that includes the type of food eaten, amount of food eaten, and side effects after eating. This record can help pinpoint your food intolerances.

General guidelines

- Consume small, frequent meals, eating every 3 to 4 hours. Do not skip meals.
- Drink at least 8-10 cups of fluid a day to compensate for loss in diarrhea.
- Limit fat intake if you experience steatorrhea. This appears as fatty loose stools that float. It occurs when fat is poorly absorbed in the GI tract. Your dietitian may recommend a Medium Chain Triglyceride (MCT) supplement.
- If you are lactose intolerant, limit intake of milk and milk products or use lactose-free products. Use calcium with vitamin D supplements to replace these nutrients in your diet.
- If you have developed strictures, avoid seeds, nuts, corn hulls, and raw fruits and vegetables.
- It may help to eat foods that have probiotics (kefir, yogurt) and prebiotics (bananas).
- Avoid spicy foods.

Dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

Facility: _____

Low-Fiber/Low-Residue Eating Plan

During periods of inflammation, follow a low-fiber/low-residue eating plan if your physician feels this is best for you. This diet works to decrease stimulation to the GI track and to decrease the amount of stool.

FOOD GROUP	FOODS RECOMMENDED	FOODS TO AVOID
<p>Milk and milk products</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk, cheese, cottage cheese, kefir and yogurt (as tolerated) • Choose yogurt with live active cultures to support gut health <p>You may be advised to limit dairy intake to no more than 2 servings a day.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogurt containing nuts, seeds or fruit skins (blueberry, strawberry, cherry) • Cheese containing nuts, seeds, or other foods not allowed
<p>Breads and Grains and Cereals</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All breads, pastries, pastas, crackers, and starches should be made with refined white or all-purpose flour and should be free of nuts or seeds • White rice • Refined cereals cooked or dry, including farina, cream of wheat, grits, puffed rice and puffed wheat • Look for cereals with less than 2g of fiber per serving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole wheat or whole grain breads, rolls, crackers, or pasta • Any grain food made with bran, seeds, nuts, coconut or raw or dried fruits • Brown rice, wild rice or quinoa • Oatmeal • Any whole grain, bran or granola cereal cracked or shredded wheat • Any cereal with nuts, seeds, coconut or dried fruit
<p>Fruits</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit juices without pulp • Canned fruit except canned berries and cherries • Ripe bananas or melons • Peeled apples or applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit juices with pulp • All raw fruit except apples, ripe bananas and melon • Canned berries and cherries • Dried fruits including raisins • Prune Juice
<p>Vegetables</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable juice without pulp • Cooked vegetables: yellow squash without seeds, green beans • Canned vegetables without seeds • Eggplant • Pumpkin • Asparagus • Potatoes without skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beets • Broccoli • Brussel sprouts • Cabbage • Sauerkraut • Cauliflower • Corn • Greens • Green peas • Lima beans • Mushrooms • Okra • Onions • Parsnips • Peppers • Potato skins • Spinach • Winter squash

FOOD GROUP	FOODS RECOMMENDED	FOODS TO AVOID
<p>Meat and Meat Substitutes</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender, well cooked meats, poultry and fish without extra fat • Eggs (cook until yolk is solid) • Soy products • Smooth nut butters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried eggs and meats • High fat lunch meats such as salami • Hot dogs • Tough or chewy cuts of meat • All beans, peas and nuts • Chunky nut butters
<p>Fats</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All oils • Margarine • Butter • Gravy • Salad dressing • Mayonnaise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coconut • Nuts • Salad dressings containing foods not allowed (poppy seed, thousand island)
<p>Sweets and Desserts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard candy • Cookies • Cakes and pastries made from refined flour • Plain fruit popsicles • Jams or jellies (without seeds) • Ice cream without nuts (if tolerating lactose) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookies, cakes and pastries made with whole grain flour • Bran • Raisins • Dried fruit • Seeds • Nuts • Coconut • Jam, preserves, or marmalade • Avoid products made with sugar alcohols (sorbitol, mannitol or xylitol)
<p>Beverages</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water, decaffeinated coffee • Caffeine-free tea • Soft drinks without caffeine • Rehydration beverages <p>Helpful Tips: Caffeine can exacerbate diarrhea. You may want to limit caffeine during periods of inflammation. Limit sugary drinks and beverages made with sugar substitutes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinks with caffeine • Alcoholic beverages • Avoid sweet fruit juices or soft drinks made with sugar or corn syrup if they make diarrhea worse.

Sample Low Fiber/Low Residue Meal Plan

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 scrambled eggs • 1 slice of white toast • 1 tsp of seed-free jelly • 1 banana
Morning Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup of applesauce and/or an oral nutrition supplement
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 slices white bread • 2-3 oz sandwich filling: meat/cheese as tolerated, tuna/egg salad, or creamy peanut butter with honey or seedless jelly • ½ cup of ripe melon • 8 oz V8 juice
Afternoon Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 oz string cheese • 4-6 soda crackers
Evening Meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 ounces of baked chicken • 1 cup of white rice • ½ cup of cooked carrots • 1 white dinner roll
Evening Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup of canned peaches and/or an oral nutrition supplement

Supplements

- Work with your dietitian to decide if supplemental vitamins and minerals will be beneficial for you. During periods of inflammation, patients may benefit from a multivitamin, folate, B6 and B12 supplements.
- Talk to your doctor or dietitian about starting a probiotic supplement to support healthy gut bacteria.
- If you are taking methotrexate or sulfasalazine, take an additional supplement of 1mg of folic acid daily, except on the day that methotrexate is given.

Remission Eating Plan

- When inflammation is in remission, consume an adequate amount of fiber. Aim for 25-35 grams of fiber each day.
- Ask your dietitian for a list of high fiber foods.
- Aim for a well-balanced diet that includes foods high in antioxidants (blueberries, artichokes, pecans), and Omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, flax seed, and walnuts)
- When you are increasing the amount of fiber in your diet, do so slowly over time. This will help reduce gas and bloating. It is also important to increase your fluids as you increase fiber.
- Only add 1 to 2 new foods to your diet each week. Add foods in small amounts and monitor your symptoms. If you develop symptoms, stop eating the new food. You can try it again in a few weeks



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This handout is intended for use during an appointment with a registered dietitian only, and is not meant for use by other clinicians.

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