

Dietary Fibre

This leaflet contains general information regarding dietary fibre. Your dietitian will be able to advise you on the amount of fibre you should be aiming to eat.

What is Fibre?

Fibre is found in fruits and vegetables, wholemeal breads, brown rice and wholewheat pasta, beans and pulses and high fibre breakfast cereals (Weetabix, Bran Flakes, Shredded Wheat, All Bran) and this diet sheet will look at fibre more closely.

Types of fibre

Fibre can be categorised into soluble, insoluble and prebiotic fibres (including resistant starch). Fibre types serve different functions in the bowel.

Soluble Fibre dissolves in water to form a gel-like material. This slows down gut transit time and helps us feel fuller for longer. The gel-like substance attracts fluid during digestion, softening the stool to make it easier to move through the bowel. Sources of soluble fibre include oats, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, brussels sprouts, sweet potato, turnip, aubergine, peas, green beans, barley and psyllium.

Insoluble fibre does not dissolve in water but passes through the small intestine without breaking down to the large intestine. Here it adds physical bulk to the stool and helps speed up the removal of waste from your gut. Sources of insoluble fibre include wholewheat flour, wheat bran, brown rice, quinoa, peanuts, almonds, walnuts, pumpkin, chia and sesame seeds, beans and vegetables, such as cauliflower, green beans and potato.

Resistant starch is not digested by the small intestine and is moved into the large intestine (colon), where it acts as food for the large intestine (prebiotics). Sources of resistant starch include oats, wheat bran, lentils, chickpeas, almonds, hazelnuts, artichokes, beetroot, pomegranate seeds.

You may be recommended a low fibre diet by your dietitian or surgical team

- before / and / or after bowel surgery
- due to bowel adhesions / strictures (narrowing)
- during an active flare-up of ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease or diverticulitis
- during periods of diarrhoea and abdominal cramping.

A low fibre / low residue diet is about choosing foods that will leave only a small amount of undigested food or residue in the bowel. Avoiding foods which aren't digested properly may help to prevent blockages in your bowel.

You may be recommended a high fibre diet by your dietitian or surgical team to help manage diverticular disease or reduce constipation.

The tables below indicate which foods are low, medium and high in fibre. Pick foods from all food groups as it is important to maintain a healthy balanced diet. You can discuss with your dietitian whether you should follow a low or high fibre diet and for how long.

Starchy Foods

Starchy foods are an important source of energy. They are the preferred energy source for your brain. It is important to include starchy foods in each meal.

	Low Fibre	Medium Fibre (if on a low fibre diet, treat with care - try small amounts with caution to identify individual tolerance)	High Fibre
Bread, Flour	White bread, white pitta bread, white chapatti, croissant. White flour and foods made with this, cornflour, soya, tapioca, semolina.		Wholemeal, granary, brown and rye bread, wholemeal pitta bread, brown chapatti, bran, wholemeal flour and foods made with this, high fibre white breads e.g. Mighty White, Best of Both
Cereals	Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, Coco Pops, Frosties, Ricicles, Special K, Sugar Puffs	Porridge	Wholegrain breakfast cereals, e.g. All-bran, Bran flakes, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix, Puffed Wheat, Fruit n Fibre, muesli and any cereals with added nuts, seeds or dried fruit.
Crackers	Crispbreads and crackers made with white flour, e.g. cream crackers, butter puffs, Ritz biscuits, water biscuits, bread sticks		Crispbreads and crackers made with wholemeal flour, e.g. Ryvita, Hovis biscuits, oatcakes.

Potatoes, Rice, Pasta	White rice White pasta Freshly cooked potato (no skin)		Brown rice, whole wheat pasta Skin on potato, cold potato dishes, e.g. potato salad
Biscuits and cakes	Biscuits, cakes and pastry made with white flour, e.g. rich tea, custard creams, chocolate coated, shortbread, éclairs, sponge cake, plain scone.		Biscuits, cakes and pastry made with wholemeal flour, oats, dried fruit or nuts, e.g. digestives, hobnobs, garibaldi, fig rolls, fruit shortcake, flapjacks, cereal bars, fruit cake, mince pies, teacakes, fruit scone, danish pastry.

Protein

Protein is an essential nutrient used for the repairing and building of tissues and muscle.

	Low Fibre	Medium Fibre (if on a low fibre diet, treat with care - try small amounts with caution to identify individual tolerance)	High Fibre
Meat, Fish, Protein alternatives	Soft tender lean meats White fish without the bones Eggs, tofu	Meat products such as sausages and beef burgers Quorn	Tough, gristly meat or skin Bony fish, e.g. sardines
Pulses	If you are a vegetarian you may take a small portion of well-cooked and smooth pureed or mashed lentils without skins, i.e. hummus, lentil soup	Soft well cooked beans and lentils without skins, i.e. marrowfat peas, lentils, yellow split peas	Firm beans and pulses with coarse skins, e.g. kidney beans, baked beans, haricot beans, borlotti beans, chick peas, soya beans
Nuts & Seeds	Smooth peanut butter, other smooth nut butters	Chunky/ rough peanut butter, other rough nut butters	All nuts, coconut, marzipan and seeds

Fruit and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are good sources of vitamins and minerals. Spread your fruit and vegetables throughout the day.

	Low Fibre	Medium Fibre (If on a low fibre diet, treat with care - try small amounts with caution to identify individual tolerance)	High Fibre
Fruit Choose up to 1-2 portions per day A portion is 2 tablespoons stewed/tinned fruit or one piece of fruit	Cooked / stewed fruit (no skins) Tinned fruit e.g. peaches, pears Pureed fruit and fruit coulis Fruit juice, e.g. orange, apple, (without pulp)	Peeled, deseeded and de-pipped fruit, e.g. pears, apples, peaches, grapes, plums, bananas, satsumas and tangerines	Fruit skins, pips, pith, seeds and stones. Berries, e.g. strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, gooseberries Dried fruit, e.g. apricots, currents, dates, prunes, raisins, sultanas Fruit juice with pulp Prune juice
Vegetables Choose 1-2 portions/day. A portion is two tablespoons cooked vegetables	Well-cooked or mashed root vegetables, i.e. carrots, swede, parsnips (no skin) Canned deseeded tomatoes, tomato purée Vegetable juice without pulp, i.e. tomato, carrot	Well cooked vegetables, i.e. spinach, broccoli and cauliflower Skinned and deseeded cucumber	Vegetables with skins, tough stalks or seeds. Raw vegetables such as peppers, radishes, celery, sweet corn, mushrooms Raw salads Vegetable juice with pulp

Dairy

Dairy is an important source of calcium. Aim to include three portions of foods calcium containing per day. A portion is approximately 200mls milk, 125-150g yogurt or matchbox size of cheese. If you do not drink cow's milk, use calcium fortified milk.

	Low Fibre	Medium Fibre (if on a low fibre diet, treat with care - try small amounts with caution to identify individual tolerance)	High Fibre
Milk, Cheese, Yogurts	All milk, cheese, natural and smooth fruit yoghurts and fromage frais, cream		Yoghurts or fromage frais containing fruit, nuts, dried fruit or muesli

Miscellaneous

	Low Fibre	Medium Fibre (If on a low fibre diet, treat with care - try small amounts with caution to identify individual tolerance)	High Fibre
Desserts and puddings	Milk puddings, custard, jelly, ice-cream, mousse, sorbet, pastries, sponge pudding, trifle, pancakes		Puddings made with fruit, nuts, dried fruit, oats or wholemeal flour.
Sugar, Preserves, Sweets	Sugar, seedless jam, honey, fine cut marmalade, lemon curd, syrup, milk chocolate, fudge, toffee, boiled sweets, fruit pastilles, fruit gums and peppermints		Jams with seeds or skins, thick cut / chunky marmalade, sweet mincemeat, sweets and chocolate containing dried fruit or nuts e.g. Fruit and Nut chocolate, Snickers, Topic, Picnic and Bounty. Liquorice Allsorts
Snacks	Skips, Wotsits, Quavers, Monster Munch, Prawn Crackers, Frazzles, Bacon Streaks, potato crisps		Chevda, Sev, Twiglets, Tortilla Chips

Sauces & Flavourings	All including tomato puree, cream and cheese sauces, tomato ketchup, brown sauce, salad cream, mayonnaise, French dressing, salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar, herbs and spices		Chutney, pickle, vegetable based sauces, black bean sauce, wholegrain mustard
Soups	Clear, cream or strained soups		Any soup containing vegetable pieces.

Fibre Reintroduction

If you are following a low fibre diet post-surgery, your dietitian will advise you when to reintroduce fibre into your diet. An example of how to increase your fibre intake is below:

Week 1

Try replacing white bread with wholemeal bread, Best of Both bread or 50/50 bread. Start off with half a slice and increase to normal portion sizes.

Week 2

Try eating an extra portion of fruit and vegetables each day. Five portions of fruit and vegetables are recommended for a healthy diet.

Week 3

Try a higher fibre breakfast cereal, e.g. Bran flakes, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix or Porridge. Start off with a half bowl and increase to normal portion sizes.

Week 4

Try other fibrous foods like pulses, nuts or dried fruit.

Handy hints and tips

1. Digestion begins in the mouth, therefore take time to chew your food well. Digestion helps to break down what we eat, including fibre.
2. Take time when eating and eat in a relaxed atmosphere.
3. If you are on a low fibre diet, eating smaller meals may help to reduce fibre intake at one time. You may require more snacks in between meals.
4. Ensure adequate fluid intake, aiming for 6-8 glasses per day.
5. Keeping mobile / active helps 'stimulate your bowel'.

Please use this dietary information when ordering from the hospital menu. Speak to your dietitian if you would like any further information.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your diet, please contact the dietitians on 020 8725 0485 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: NDI_DF_02 Published: June 2024 Review date: June 2026
