



Low-Fiber Foods

What is a low-fiber diet?

A low-fiber diet means you eat foods that do not have a lot of fiber.

If you have certain medical problems, you may be asked to reduce the amount of fiber in your diet to rest your bowels (or intestines). A low-fiber diet reduces the amount of undigested food moving through your bowels, so that your body makes a smaller amount of stool. A low-fiber diet may be suggested after some types of surgery or if you have diarrhea, cramping, or trouble digesting food.

There are 2 kinds of fiber, soluble and insoluble. Insoluble fiber doesn't dissolve in the stomach and can have rough hard bits that irritate the intestines as it passes through. Soluble fiber attracts water into the intestines and becomes a gel. Foods with a little soluble fiber can often be eaten in small amounts (depending on why you're on a low-fiber diet) because the soft fiber gel doesn't irritate the intestines the same way.

What are low-fiber foods?

Here is a list of low-fiber foods and lists of higher-fiber foods you should avoid. Remember to always choose foods that you would normally eat. Do not try any foods that caused you discomfort or allergic reactions in the past.

If you are on a "low-residue diet," your food choices are even more restricted than those listed below.

Talk with your cancer care team or dietitian if you have questions about certain foods or amounts.

Meat, fish, poultry, and protein

Eat

- Tender cuts of meat
- Ground meat
- Tofu
- Fish and shellfish
- Smooth peanut butter
- Eggs

Bake, broil, or poach meats, and use mild seasonings. Try preparing meats as stews, roasts, meatloaves, casseroles, sandwiches, and soups using ingredients on the approved lists.

Scramble, poach, or boil eggs; or make omelets, soufflés, custard, puddings, and casseroles, using ingredients noted below. You might want to ask your doctor, nurse, or dietitian about other foods may be OK for you to eat, and find out when you can go back to your normal diet.

Avoid

- All beans, nuts, peas, lentils, and legumes
- Processed meats, hot dogs, sausage, and cold cuts
- Tough meats with gristle

Dairy: Milk and cheese

Eat

Only in small to medium amounts and only if they don't cause problems for you

- Milk, chocolate milk, buttermilk, and milk drinks
- Yogurt without seeds or granola
- Sour cream
- Cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Custard or pudding

- Ice cream or frozen desserts (without nuts)
- Cream sauces, soups, and casseroles

You can use these items in desserts, snacks, or breads.

Bread, cereals, and grains

Eat

- White breads, waffles, French toast, plain white rolls, or white bread toast
- Pretzels
- Plain pasta or noodles
- White rice
- Crackers, zwieback, melba, and matzoh (no cracked wheat or whole grains)
- Cereals without whole grains, added fiber, seeds, raisins, or other dried fruit

Use white flour for baking and making sauces. Grains, such as white rice, Cream of Wheat, or grits, should be well-cooked.

Include the above grains in casseroles, dumplings, soufflés, cheese strata, kugels, and pudding.

Avoid any food that contains

- Brown or wild rice
- Whole grains, cracked grains, or whole wheat products
- Kasha (buckwheat)
- Corn bread or corn meal
- Graham crackers
- Bran
- Wheat germ
- Nuts
- Granola
- Coconut
- Dried fruit
- Seeds

Vegetables and potatoes

Eat

- Tender, well-cooked fresh or canned vegetables without seeds, stems, or skins
- Cooked sweet or white potatoes without skins
- Strained vegetable juices without pulp or spices

You can also eat these with cream sauces, or in soups, soufflés, kugels, and casseroles.

Avoid

- All raw or steamed vegetables
- All types of beans
- Potatoes with skin
- Peas
- Corn
- Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and greens
- Sauerkraut
- Onions

Fruits and desserts

Eat

- Soft canned or cooked fruit without seeds or skins (small amounts)
- Small amounts of well-ripened banana
- Strained or clear juices
- Small amounts of soft cantaloupe or honeydew melon
- Cookies and other desserts without whole grains, dried fruit, berries, nuts, or coconut
- Sherbet and popsicles

Serving suggestions include gelatins, milk shakes, frozen desserts, puddings, tapioca, cakes, and sauces.

Avoid

- All raw or dried fruits
- Berries
- Prune juice, prunes, and raisins

Other foods**Eat**

- Mayonnaise and mild salad dressings
- Margarine, butter, cream, and oils in small amounts
- Plain gravies
- Plain bouillon and broth
- Ketchup and mild mustard
- Spices, cooked herbs, and salt
- Sugar, honey, and syrup
- Clear jellies
- Hard candy and marshmallows
- Plain chocolate

Avoid

- Marmalade
- Pickles, olives, relish, and horseradish
- Popcorn
- Potato chips

Liquids

Keep in mind that low-fiber foods cause fewer bowel movements and smaller stools. You may need to drink extra fluids to help prevent constipation while you are on a low-fiber diet. Drink plenty of water unless your doctor tells you otherwise, and use juices and milk as noted above.

cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345