

FOODIE FACTS & Tips

"I LOVE A GOOD CURRY, BUT I WILL SUFFER LATER!!"

Enjoy your food! Having a stoma shouldn't mean that you have to deprive yourself of the foods and drink that you enjoy, especially if you've had to have a restricted diet before your surgery, for example if you had Crohn's disease.

Here are some sensible approaches you can take to ensure you do enjoy your food without suffering afterwards.

CHEWING WELL

As children we were always told to chew our food. The action of chewing (albeit a chore) is a part of the digestive process. Whilst your teeth grind the food, saliva helps to break it down further and soften it ready for the next part of the digestive process in the stomach. There are other benefits of taking your time to chew; you eat slower and so avoid over-eating and it also reduces swallowing air which can cause wind.

LITTLE & OFTEN

Eating regular smaller meals is generally recommended. Extremes like skipping meals and then over-eating because you are famished causes excess wind.

EXPERIMENTING WITH FOOD

Try new foods in small portions, don't eat a whole plateful in one go, and try them at least three times before you decide that you won't eat them again.

FOOD DIARY

Keeping a food diary can be useful to help you find patterns and work out the effect of food on your bowel. Whilst there are common foods that affect some people with a stoma there will be certain foods that affect you differently, so it's always worth trying it out yourself in small doses at first.

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Staying active can mean different things for different people, be it daily walks, swimming, running, shopping, or gardening. Keeping your weight in check can avoid a lot of stoma problems. However be sensible with your activities to avoid hernias.

STAY HYDRATED

You should ensure there is a good balance in your fluid intake and it is advised you should drink around 8-10 glasses per day, which may vary depending on the weather, your level of activity and if you have had alcohol. The intake can be made up of any liquid like milk, juice, squash etc. Dehydration affects your electrolyte balance, especially potassium and sodium levels. Symptoms such as loss of appetite, drowsiness and leg cramping may indicate sodium depletion. Fatigue, muscle weakness, shortness of breath amongst a few are associated with low potassium. Your diet should include fluids and foods rich in sodium and potassium.

ALWAYS LOOK IN THE BOWL

Always look in the bowl and make the connections between what you have eaten and what you see and smell. You will start to notice if a particular food has a regular effect on you and you will be able to plan your meals and aftermath. Remember that different foods will cause your output to change colour. Beetroot will turn it bright red and have you running for A&E before you remember what you had for lunch (don't worry, it's happened to lots of people), Oreo biscuits can turn it black, and red cabbage can produce a wonderful shade of green.

'THAT'S THE CULPRIT'

Once you are familiar with different foods and how your bowel responds to them, introduce one new food at a time to see what the effect is – wind, consistency, odour.



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