

4 Step Bowel Obstruction Diet

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Patient information leaflet



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Who is this leaflet for?

The information in this leaflet is for you if you:

- Have been diagnosed with bowel obstruction
- Are at risk of developing bowel obstruction from a cancer diagnosis or spread of cancer to the bowel
- Are at risk of developing bowel obstruction from scarring from a previous operation
- Have Crohn's Disease with stricture(s)
- Have a mass, or hernia, in your small or large intestine (bowel) and are at risk of a blockage
- Have delayed emptying of the stomach

Why is it important for me to eat the right sort of foods with bowel obstruction?

If you have a mass in your small or large intestine (also known as bowel or gut), or it is narrower than normal, you may be at risk of a blockage. You may have already been admitted to hospital with a blockage (when you are not able to open your bowels and have symptoms such as pain or vomiting).

Humans are not able to digest certain foods and so they can pass through our body without being broken down properly. They can pass through your gut in big pieces and can increase your risk of a blockage by getting caught in a narrow space in your small or large intestine. This can also happen if you do not chew your food properly. Examples of foods that humans cannot digest are:

- the skins, pips and seeds of fruit and vegetables
- fibrous fruits e.g. rhubarb, celery
- raw or undercooked vegetables
- beans, nuts and pulses e.g. lentils, chickpeas

- fibrous vegetables e.g. mushrooms, sweetcorn, lettuce and other salad leaves
- bread and bread products e.g. crumpets, muffins, doughnuts, since they form a bolus (ball) and may not pass through a narrowed space.

Fibre also makes our stools (poo) form a 'bulk' and makes them solid. When you are at risk of bowel obstruction it is better to have stools that are softer and easier to pass. This is why you are encouraged to have a low fibre diet. Following this diet will mean that your stools will be looser than normal.

Certain foods may also lead to symptoms such as pain, bloating, feeling full, feeling sick and tightness across your abdomen (stomach). You may also find it harder to pass a bowel motion.

You have been given this booklet because changing your diet can lower your risk of a blockage. Eating the right foods for you may also help to reduce your symptoms.

How do I use this leaflet?

This leaflet is only to be given to you under the care of a Registered Dietitian. The information needs to be carefully explained to you so that you know how to use it.

There is limited evidence to establish the best diet to follow when you are diagnosed with the risk of bowel obstruction. Everyone is different and no day is the same.

Depending on your situation, you may need to make more changes than others. This booklet is divided into 4 steps. You will find it helpful to read carefully through the information provided so that you understand what to do. You may also find it helpful to write down any questions you have about the diet. Please always ask your dietitian if you are not sure about what to do.

You will have to eat very differently with this diet. It is important not to eat or drink large amounts of food or fluid in one sitting since this may lead to more symptoms of bloating and pain. You may find it hard to change the habit of '3 meals per day'. If you are at risk of bowel obstruction eating and drinking 'little and often' will help with your symptoms.

Your dietitian will let you know which step you should be following. They will also advise you when you can move to the next step.

You may find that you have to go backwards and forwards through the 4 steps depending on your symptoms. For example, if you are in pain or your bowels stop working, you will have to return to liquids for a while until your symptoms settle again.

You are likely to need to use nutritional supplement drinks at certain times to make sure that you are meeting your nutritional needs. Your dietitian will help you with this, and will also tell you if you need to take any vitamin or mineral supplements whilst following the diet.

The 4 Step Bowel Obstruction Diet

Step 1	Clear fluids only	Page 6
Step 2	ALL thin liquids	Page 8
Step 3	Smooth or puréed low fibre foods. No bread products.	Page 11
Step 4	Soft sloppy low fibre foods. No bread products.	Page 18

Please always ask your dietitian for help if you have any questions or concerns.

My Dietitian: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Step 1: Clear fluids ONLY

What can I drink on Step 1?

You need to follow Step 1 if you have had a complete blockage. When you start to pass wind again and your symptoms settle, you will be encouraged to start to sip on **CLEAR FLUIDS (liquids)** only. You may be asked to start clear fluids before your bowels open so small amounts regularly during the day are recommended.

You will also need to follow Step 1 if you are getting symptoms when you drink liquids from Step 2 such as a cup of milky coffee or tea.

You will need to follow Step 1 if you have proceeded to Step 2, 3 or 4 and start to develop severe symptoms and your bowels stop working.

Only clear liquids are allowed. Examples are:

- Water
- Black tea
- Black coffee
- Squash
- Smooth clear fruit juice e.g. apple, cranberry juice
- Flavoured water
- Oasis®, Rubicon® (still), Vimto®
- Coconut water
- Herbal and fruit teas
- Clear consommé soup (no bits)
- Clear miso soup
- Hot cup of Marmite® or Bovril®
- Hot cup of water with a dissolved stock cube or stock pot
- Still isotonic sports drinks e.g. Lucozade Sport®, Gatorade Sport®, Powerade®

Step 2: All thin liquids

What can I drink on Step 2?

If your bowels have been opening regularly after starting clear fluids and your symptoms from bowel obstruction have settled, you will be advised to move to Step 2. This means that you can have **ALL forms of thin liquids**.

You will need to return to thin liquids and Step 2 if you have proceeded to Step 3 or 4 and start to develop symptoms again. Once the symptoms settle you can then start to gradually move back up to Step 3 and start to introduce solids again.

It is important to introduce the drinks in Step 2 very gradually if you have been following Step 1. This will let your body tell you if you can tolerate the changes and continue with Step 2. Each day add one extra drink. If you increase slowly you are more likely to be able to stay on Step 2 and will not get symptoms that mean you need to go back to Step 1.

Please remember:

- The liquids need to be a thin consistency i.e. no thicker than whole milk.
- The liquids need to be completely smooth with no bits.
- The liquids need to be low in fibre e.g. thin smooth fruit juice with no bits – no smoothies.

The following drinks provide energy, protein and vitamins and minerals. Always use whole milk where possible. Try to sip on small amounts of drinks throughout the day. This is the easiest way to increase your intake of liquids. It will help to stop you getting dehydrated.

Milk or dairy free milk alternatives e.g. almond, soya, oat, cashew, hazelnut, coconut, rice, hempseed, pea protein	Flavoured milk e.g. strawberry (no bits), chocolate, banana. Add Nesquik®, Milo® or Crusha®
Thin milkshakes e.g. Frijj®, Yop®, Yazoo® Shaken Udder®	Flavoured dairy free thin milkshakes e.g. Alpro®, Oatly®, Rude Health®
Yoghurt drinks e.g. Yakult®, Actimel®, Yop®	Kefir drinks e.g. Biotiful®, COCOS®, The Collective®, Muller®
Milky coffee, latté, cappuccino, iced coffee	Protein milkshakes e.g. UFIT®, Barebells®, Nurishment®
Hot chocolate made with milk or milk alternatives e.g. Options Vegan Belgian Hot Chocolate®, Galaxy Vegan Instant Hot Chocolate®	Horlicks®, Ovaltine®
Thin smooth soups e.g. chicken, oxtail, sweet potato, butternut squash, leek and potato, cream of tomato, cream of mushroom, carrot and coriander, mulligatawny	Thin smooth fruit juice (no bits)
Thin custard (fresh, tinned, powdered). Loosen with milk or milk alternatives if too thick.	Jelly, milky jelly (without fruit) with instant whipped/spray cream
Smooth ice cream, vegan ice cream, smooth frozen yoghurt, sorbet (no bits)	Ice lollies, Mini Milk® lollies, frozen yoghurt lollies

You can also suck on boiled sweets, mints and smooth chocolate. These must not be chewed or swallowed in pieces.

You can also include the clear fluids from Step 1 on page 6–7.

Which supplement drinks do I need during Step 2?

It may not be possible to meet your nutritional needs on liquids only so your dietitian or doctor will prescribe nutritional supplements.

My supplement prescription:

What do I do if my symptoms return?

If you start to experience any of the following, please contact your doctor or dietitian immediately:

- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting
- Feeling full after drinking
- Your bowels do not open for more than 2 days
- A feeling of 'tightness' across your stomach
- Feeling bloated
- Abdominal (tummy) swelling
- Abdominal (tummy) pain.

These symptoms could be a sign that your bowel may be blocked or partly blocked. It is important to speak to your dietitian so that they can advise you what to do. If you are unable to speak to them immediately, return to Step 1 and clear fluids only. Once your symptoms start to settle you can gradually move back to Step 2.

Step 3 Smooth or puréed low fibre foods. No bread products.

What can I eat and drink on Step 3?

If your bowels are opening regularly and you are not in any pain after several days of Step 2 drinks, your dietitian or doctor will ask you to move to Step 3.

This means that you can start to eat **SMOOTH OR PURÉED LOW FIBRE FOODS**, as well as all liquids in Steps 1 and 2 (see pages 6–10).

It is important to introduce the foods in Step 3 very gradually. This will let your body tell you if you can tolerate the changes and continue with a smooth, purée diet. Each day add only one extra food. If you increase slowly you are more likely to be able to stay on Step 3 and not get symptoms that mean you need to go back to Step 1 or 2.

- Always eat small portions several times during the day. A usual meal pattern is not appropriate. Larger meals may increase your risk of symptoms returning.
- Aim to eat at least 6 times each day.
- All food needs to be smooth or should be able to melt in your mouth.
- All food should be able to 'fall off' a spoon easily.
- All food should be swallowed without needing to chew it.
- All food should be low in fibre.
- You can have one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables each day **ONLY**. Some fruit and vegetables must be completely avoided. See pages 27–29 for a list of foods allowed and foods to avoid.
- Please look at the lists on pages 30–37 for other foods that are high in fibre and need to be avoided e.g. lentils, chickpeas, beans.

Tips for following a smooth, puréed low fibre diet

- Equipment: Using a hand blender is the simplest way of producing puréed foods.
- Puréed foods can look more appetising if they are presented separately e.g. separate a puréed meat casserole from the (allowed) vegetables and potatoes.
- Colour is also important e.g. try serving brightly coloured vegetables such as puréed carrots with mashed potato and puréed chicken and sauce/gravy.
- Cooked foods should be cut into small pieces then liquidised, blended or mashed, and if necessary sieved to a smooth consistency.
- You will need to add extra liquid to most foods before or after they have been puréed. To improve the taste and nutritional value; add whole milk, melted butter or spread, cream (milk based or soya/oat cream) or creamy soup (with no bits) instead of water.
- Use garlic or chilli-infused oil when cooking to add flavour.

What foods do I need to avoid during Step 3?

Some foods need to be completely avoided (even if puréed). These include the pips, skins and seeds of fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, lentils, chickpeas and beans, nuts and seeds, which are not easily digested and may get caught in your bowel. Bread and bread products e.g. crumpets, muffins, doughnuts, also need to be avoided. They can form a bolus (ball) and may not pass through a narrowed space in your intestine. This can increase your risk of an obstruction. Please look at the lists on pages 27–37 for more details.

What can I eat for breakfast during Step 3?

- ‘Soggy’ cereal e.g. cornflakes or Rice Krispies® soaked in whole milk, milk alternatives or chocolate milk
- Small bowl of Ready Brek® made with milk or milk alternatives

- Puréed sweetened fruit – tinned pears, stewed fruit, fruit compote (one portion of fruit per day from the allowed list)
- Full fat smooth (no lumps) yoghurt or fromage frais, Petit filou®, Skyr® yoghurt, Coconut collaborative® natural yoghurt, Alpro® Greek Style plain yoghurt alternative, Koko® dairy free plain yoghurt
- Glass of fruit juice (no bits)
- Milkshake (see Step 2 on page 9 for options)
- Smooth scrambled egg

Add sugar, syrup, honey, seedless jam or marmalade, cream, butter or spread for extra nutrition.

What can I eat for my meals during Step 3?

- Mashed potatoes or mashed sweet potatoes (no skin) served with
 - puréed meats and gravy
 - puréed meat alternatives e.g. Quorn® mince or vegetarian sausages, Beyond meat® meatballs or sausages with plenty of gravy or sauce
 - puréed mince dishes
 - puréed fish with white, cheese or smooth tomato sauce
 - puréed fish pie
 - puréed stew (made with root vegetables)
 - blended gammon or ham with white or cheese sauce
- Jacket potato (no skin) mashed with
 - cheese and butter
 - puréed tuna mayonnaise
 - puréed egg mayonnaise
 - smooth tikka or curry sauce
 - spaghetti hoops, tinned spaghetti

- Melt-in-the-mouth crisps, crackers or breadsticks e.g. butter puffs, Carrs® cheese melts, Cornish wafers, crisp bakes, French or Melba toast, Ritz®, Tuc® topped with
 - dips e.g. sour cream, taramasalata, smooth guacamole, cheese dip
 - smooth tuna, salmon or egg mayonnaise
 - tinned spaghetti or ravioli
 - cream cheese, cottage cheese
 - vegan soft cheese alternatives
 - smooth paté (crab, tuna, mackerel, chicken liver)
 - avocado

- Scrambled egg with added butter and grated cheese

- Smooth “scrambled” medium-firm tofu with
 - added butter or spread and grated cheese
 - turmeric, curry powder or other spices
 - soy, teriyaki, hoisin, tamari sauces

- Avocado with
 - smooth tuna and mayonnaise
 - balsamic vinegar

- Bowl of **smooth** soup
 - Butternut, carrot, broccoli and stilton, leek and potato, chicken, oxtail, cream of tomato, mulligatawny, smooth fish chowder (no sweetcorn)
 - Soup can be homemade, bought fresh, tinned or powdered
 - You will need to avoid soups that are very high in fibre and that contain lentils, beans, celery, peas e.g. minestrone, pea and ham
 - You can add silken or firm tofu for extra creaminess and added protein

- Always blend soup so that it is smooth
- Creamy soups have extra nutrition
- Blended casserole dishes with added gravy made into a thick soup

You can add one (puréed) portion of the allowed vegetables to meals that do not already contain vegetables e.g. carrots, parsnips, butternut squash, heads of broccoli or cauliflower.

Try one of the following to add flavour: redcurrant jelly, mint jelly, soy sauce, tamari sauce, hoisin sauce, tomato sauce, harissa, Worcestershire sauce, Henderson's relish, smooth mustard, sriracha, Tabasco® sauce, nutritional yeast, wasabi paste, miso paste, Bovril®, Marmite®.

Try one of the following to add extra nutrition to soups and sauces: butter, spread, mayonnaise, cream, grated cheese, cream cheese and crème fraiche.

What can I eat for pudding during Step 3?

- Smooth milk puddings e.g. plain or chocolate custard, rice pudding, semolina, tapioca
- Smooth puddings e.g. blancmange, mousse, fruit fool, milk jelly, Angel Delight®, instant whip, egg custard, crème caramel, Gu® desserts
- Smooth dairy free puddings e.g. Alpro® soya desserts, Coconut Collaborative® Little Chocolate Pots
- Sponge or other cakes blended with chocolate sauce, cream, custard or ice cream e.g. Madeleines, Battenberg, Madeira, Angel Slices, caramel cake bars, mini chocolate rolls, lemon slices, banana bread
- Tinned or stewed fruit with added cream, yoghurt, crème fraiche, custard or ice cream (one portion of fruit per day)
- Apple pie blended to a smooth consistency with added cream, yoghurt, ice cream or custard (one portion of fruit per day)
- Full fat smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, petit filou
- High protein yoghurts e.g. Skyr®, Arla protein®, Lindahls Kvarg®

- Dairy free yoghurts e.g. Alpro® soya, The Coconut Collaborative®, The Collective®, COCOS®, KoKo®, Oykos®, Oatly Oatgurt®
- Smooth ice cream, sorbet, frozen yoghurt, Mini Milk®, mini Magnum®

Add sugar, syrup, honey, seedless jam or marmalade, lemon curd, treacle, cream, custard, ice cream, crème fraiche, evaporated or condensed milk to add extra nutrition.

What can I eat for a snack during Step 3?

Puddings can be eaten at any time of the day as a snack.

Choose 'full fat' products for extra nutrition.

- 'Dunked' plain biscuits in a warm milky drink e.g. rich tea, Nice®, malted milk, custard creams, Oreo®, ginger nuts, bourbons
- Bowl of cornflakes or Rice Krispies® soaked in whole milk, milk alternatives or chocolate milk
- Crisps that 'melt-in-the-mouth' e.g. Skips®, Wotsits®, Quavers®, Pom Bears®, Pringles®, Walkers®
- Add smooth dips e.g. sour cream, smooth guacamole, taramasalata, cheese dip, aioli
- Melt-in-the-mouth crackers (ensure these are well chewed before swallowing) (see page 30 for options)
- Spoonful of smooth nut butter e.g. almond butter, peanut butter
- Spoonful of hazelnut spread or Nutella®
- Spoonful of any other smooth spread e.g. Lotus® Biscoff spread, smooth chocolate spread, Sweet Freedom® chocolate spread
- Portion of soft cheese (no bits) e.g. Laughing Cow®, Dairylea®, Philadelphia®, Primula®, Quark® or cream cheese

What can I drink during Step 3?

It is important to drink plenty of fluid each day to prevent dehydration. You can choose any of the liquids listed in Steps 1 and 2 on pages 6–10. Choosing nourishing liquids from Step 2 will help to increase your nutritional intake.

Which supplement drinks do I need during Step 3?

It may not be possible to meet your nutritional needs with diet alone in Step 3, so your dietitian or doctor may prescribe nutritional supplements.

My supplement prescription:

If you start to experience any of the following, please contact your doctor or dietitian immediately:

- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting
- Feeling full after eating or drinking
- Your bowels do not open for more than 2 days
- A feeling of 'tightness' across your stomach
- Feeling bloated
- Abdominal (tummy) swelling
- Abdominal (tummy) pain.

These symptoms could be a sign that your bowel may be blocked or partly blocked. It is important to speak to your dietitian so that they can advise you what to do. If you are unable to speak to them immediately, return to Step 1 and clear fluids only. Once your symptoms start to settle you can gradually move back to Step 2, and then Step 3.

Step 4 – Soft sloppy low fibre. No bread products.

What can I eat and drink on Step 4?

If your bowels are opening regularly and you are not in any pain after several days on Step 3 consistencies, your dietitian or doctor will ask you to move to Step 4.

This means that you can start to eat **SOFT SLOPPY LOW FIBRE FOODS**, as well as all liquids and smooth, puréed foods from Steps 1, 2 and 3. You will need to completely avoid all bread and bread products.

It is important to introduce the foods in Step 4 very gradually. This will let your body tell you if you can tolerate the changes and continue with a soft sloppy low fibre diet. Each day add only one extra food. If you increase slowly you are more likely to be able to stay on Step 4 and not get symptoms that mean you need to go back to Step 1 or 2.

- Always eat small portions several times during the day.
- All food needs to be soft, moist and sloppy.
- All food should be chewed well before you swallow each mouthful.
- Make sure all your meals have additional sauce or gravy to moisten them.
- All food should be low in fibre.
- You can have one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables each day **ONLY**. Some fruit and vegetables must be avoided. See pages 27–29 for a list of foods allowed and foods to avoid.
- Please look at the lists on pages 30–37 for other foods that are high in fibre and need to be avoided e.g. lentils, chickpeas, beans.

Tips for following a soft sloppy low fibre diet

- Taking foods little and often is advisable.
- Aim for small frequent meals and snacks, rather than 3 meals per day.
- Using sauces, butter, gravy, cream or custard can help to soften foods and keep them moist.

- Foods can be softened by chopping, mincing and mashing.
- Small sips of a drink can help with swallowing foods.
- Avoid foods that need a lot of chewing or do not break down well when chewed.
- Use garlic or chilli-infused oil when cooking to add flavour.
- If there are no vegetables in your dish, then you can add one portion of 'allowed' foods to your meal. See pages 28–29.

What foods do I need to avoid during Step 4?

Some foods need to be completely avoided (even if puréed). These include the pips, skins and seeds of fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, lentils, chickpeas and beans, which are not easily digested and may get caught in your bowel. Bread and bread products e.g. crumpets, muffins, doughnuts, also need to be avoided. They can form a bolus (ball) and may not pass through a narrowed space. This can increase your risk of a blockage or partial blockage and may increase your symptoms. Please look at the lists on pages 27–37 for more details.

What can I eat for breakfast during Step 4?

- Cornflakes or Rice Krispies® soaked in whole milk, milk alternatives or chocolate milk
- Ready Brek® with plenty of whole milk or milk alternatives (add cornflakes or Frosties® for texture)
- Stewed or tinned fruit, fruit compote (one portion of fruit per day – from the allowed list on page 27)
- Full fat smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, Petit filou®, Skyr® yoghurt, Coconut collaborative® natural yoghurt, Alpro® Greek Style plain yoghurt alternative, Koko® dairy free plain yoghurt
- Glass of fruit juice (no bits)
- Milkshake (see Step 2 on page 9 for options)
- Omelette, scrambled, poached or soft, boiled egg
- Smooth “scrambled” medium-firm tofu with added butter or spread and grated cheese

What can I eat for my meals during Step 4?

You are unlikely to be able to manage your normal portions at meals. In fact, it is better to have a very small plate every time you eat. Leave it an hour, and then come back to have another small plate of the same meal or a pudding if you like. This will allow the food to pass through your gut and will reduce the chance of a blockage or partial blockage or symptoms of pain and bloating returning.

- Lancashire hotpot, meat or chicken casserole (make sure the meat is very tender and chewed well before swallowing). Casseroles can also be made with meat or chicken alternatives
- Cottage pie, shepherd's pie with plenty of gravy
- Corned beef hash with plenty of gravy
- Fish pie
- Fillets of fish with a white, cheese or tomato based sauce
- Peeled, mashed or boiled potatoes, mashed sweet potatoes, polenta, buckwheat, bulgur wheat, millet, pearl barley, quinoa or white couscous served with
 - minced beef, lamb, turkey, chicken, pork
 - meatballs with plenty of sauce or gravy
 - minced meat alternatives e.g. Quorn® mince with plenty of gravy or sauce
 - vegetarian sausages, Beyond meat®, Green Cuisine® meatballs or sausages with plenty of gravy or sauce
 - chicken alternatives with plenty of sauce
 - poached fish in sauce (check for bones)
 - fish pie, fish mornay, fish fingers (well-chewed)
 - tinned fish (tuna, salmon – no bones) with plenty of mayonnaise or sauce
 - stews and casseroles (ensure all vegetables are from the allowed list on page 28)

- Eggs
 - Scrambled egg with extra butter and cheese
 - Cheese omelette
 - Soft poached or boiled egg
 - Fillings from quiche or crustless quiche (no products from the avoid lists on pages 27–37)
 - Soufflés e.g. cheese, salmon

- Pasta (white, quinoa, spelt pasta), dried or fresh
 - Well-cooked small pasta shapes served with plenty of sauce e.g. cheese sauce or dairy free cheese sauce e.g. Sacla® Vegan Cheese Sauce, smooth tomato sauce, bolognese sauce (made with passata)
 - Sloppy macaroni cheese
 - Tinned spaghetti or ravioli

- Noodles
 - Egg, rice, vermicelli, udon, kabuto, ramen, soba
 - Add a small portion of noodles to a smooth soup or broth (no vegetables)
 - Try teriyaki, hoisin, soy or tamari sauce, or miso paste to add flavour
 - Wontons in clear soup or broth

- Rice (always use white rice) e.g. long grain, risotto, paella, jasmine or basmati
 - served with curry with small pieces of tender meat, fish, soft cooked tofu/silken tofu or well-cooked vegetables from the allowed lists on page 28 e.g. sweet potato, cauliflower, squash (add more sauce than rice)
 - served with plenty of bolognese sauce or chilli con carne (no beans, more sauce than rice)

- Jacket potato (no skin) mashed with
 - cheese and butter
 - tuna mayonnaise
 - egg mayonnaise
 - tikka or curry sauce
 - coronation chicken (more sauce than chicken)
 - spaghetti hoops or tinned spaghetti

- Bowl of soup
 - Butternut, carrot, broccoli and stilton, leek and potato, chicken, oxtail, cream of tomato, mulligatawny, smooth fish chowder (no sweetcorn)
 - In Step 4 soups do not need to be completely smooth
 - Soup can be homemade, bought fresh, tinned or powdered
 - You will need to avoid soups that are very high in fibre and that contain lentils, beans, celery, peas e.g. minestrone, pea and ham
 - You can add silken or firm tofu for extra creaminess and added protein
 - Creamy soups have extra nutrition
 - Blended casserole dishes with added gravy can be made into a thick soup

- Melt-in-the-mouth crisps, crackers or breadsticks e.g. butter puffs, Carrs® cheese melts, Cornish wafers, crisp bakes, French or Melba toast, Ritz®, Tuc® topped with
 - dips e.g. sour cream, taramasalata, smooth guacamole, cheese dip
 - tuna, salmon or egg mayonnaise
 - tinned spaghetti or ravioli
 - cream cheese, cottage cheese
 - vegan soft cheese alternatives
 - smooth paté (tuna, mackerel, chicken liver, crab, salmon)
 - avocado

- Avocado with
 - flaked crab meat
 - prawns in a cocktail sauce
 - tuna and mayonnaise

Try one of the following to add flavour: redcurrant jelly, mint jelly, soy sauce, tamari sauce, hoisin sauce, tomato sauce, harissa, Worcestershire sauce, Henderson's relish, smooth mustard, sriracha, Tabasco® sauce, nutritional yeast, wasabi paste, miso paste, Bovril®, Marmite®

Try one of the following to add extra nutrition to soups and sauces: butter, spread, mayonnaise, cream, grated cheese, cream cheese and crème fraîche.

What can I eat for pudding during Step 4?

- Sponge pudding or cake softened with cream, smooth ice cream or custard, e.g. Madeleines, Battenberg, Madeira, Angel Slices, caramel cake bars, mini chocolate rolls, lemon slices, banana bread
- Apple crumble (no oats or dried fruit) softened with added cream, yoghurt, ice cream or custard (one portion of fruit per day from the allowed list on page 27)
- Milk puddings e.g. plain or chocolate custard, rice pudding, semolina, tapioca
- Smooth puddings e.g. blancmange, mousse, fruit fool, milk jelly, Angel Delight®, instant whip, egg custard, crème caramel, Gu® desserts
- Smooth dairy free puddings e.g. Alpro® soya desserts, Coconut Collaborative® Little Chocolate Pots
- Tinned or stewed fruit with added cream, yoghurt, crème fraîche, custard or ice cream (one portion of fruit per day from the allowed lists on page 27)
- Full fat smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, petit filou
- High protein yoghurts e.g. Skyr®, Arla protein®, Lindahls Kvarg®

- Dairy free yoghurts e.g. Alpro® soya, The Coconut Collaborative®, The Collective®, COCOS®, KoKo®, Oykos®, Oatly Oatgurt® (only with allowed fruits on page 27)
- Smooth ice cream, sorbet, frozen yoghurt, Mini Milk®, mini Magnum®

Add sugar, syrup, honey, seedless jam or marmalade, lemon curd, treacle, cream, custard, ice cream, crème fraiche, evaporated or condensed milk to add extra nutrition to puddings.

What can I eat for a snack during Step 4?

Puddings can be eaten at any time of the day as a snack.

Choose 'full fat' products for extra nutrition.

- 'Dunked' plain biscuits in a warm milky drink e.g. rich tea, Nice®, malted milk, custard creams, bourbons, Oreo®, ginger nuts
- Bowl of corn flakes or Rice Krispies® soaked in whole milk, milk alternatives or chocolate milk
- Smooth chocolate bars
- Crisps that 'melt-in-the-mouth' e.g. Skips®, Wotsits®, Quavers®, Pom Bears®, Pringles® or Walkers®
 - Add smooth dips e.g. sour cream, smooth guacamole, taramasalata, cheese dip
- Melt-in-the-mouth crackers or biscuits with plain cream cheese or smooth paté (ensure this is well chewed before swallowing) (see page 30 for options)
- Spoonful of smooth nut butter e.g. almond butter, peanut butter
- Spoonful of hazelnut spread or Nutella®
- Spoonful of any other smooth spread e.g. Lotus® Biscuit spread, smooth chocolate spread, Sweet Freedom® chocolate spread
- Portion of soft cheese (no bits) e.g. Laughing Cow®, Philadelphia®, Primula®, Quark® or cream cheese.

What can I drink during Step 4?

It is important to drink plenty of fluid each day to prevent dehydration. You can choose any of the liquids listed in Steps 1 and 2 on pages 6–10. Choosing nourishing liquids from Step 2 will help to increase your nutritional intake.

Which supplement drinks do I need during Step 4?

It may not be possible to meet your nutritional needs on diet alone, so your dietitian or doctor will prescribe nutritional supplements.

My supplement prescription:

If you start to experience any of the following, please contact your doctor or dietitian immediately:

- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting
- Feeling full after eating or drinking
- Your bowels do not open for more than 2 days
- A feeling of ‘tightness’ across your stomach
- Feeling bloated
- Abdominal (tummy) swelling
- Abdominal (tummy) pain.

These symptoms could be a sign that your bowel may be blocked or partly blocked. It is important to speak to your dietitian so that they can advise you what to do. If you are unable to speak to them immediately, return to Step 1 and clear fluids only. Once your symptoms start to settle you can gradually move back to Step 2, then Step 3, then Step 4.

What can I eat and drink after Step 4?

If you have had previous episodes of bowel obstruction or partial bowel obstruction you may need to continue with Step 4 for an extended period of time. If you are doing well it may be possible to move on from Step 4.

At this point you may be able to introduce small amounts of toasted bread, and gradually increase the amount of fruit and vegetables you eat from the allowed lists on pages 27–28.

Please always speak to your doctor or dietitian before making any changes since your medical condition will need to be considered before introducing some foods. They will advise you if it is possible to include other foods and how to do this.

Which foods can increase my risk of a blockage?

It is important to completely avoid the foods that may increase your chance of getting a blockage. We advise that you follow a strict LOW FIBRE diet. This is because fibre is not easily digested and can pass through your bowel in large lumps. It also bulks your stools and makes them solid.

Some foods need to be completely avoided (even if puréed). These include the pips, skins and seeds of fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, lentils, chickpeas and beans, which are not easily digested and may get caught in your bowel. Bread and bread products e.g. crumpets, muffins, doughnuts, also need to be avoided. They can form a bolus (ball) and may not pass through a narrowed space. This can increase your risk of an obstruction.

The lists below will help you make the right choices.

The foods you are allowed to eat may need to be mashed or puréed (if you are following Step 3 of the diet). Always check with your dietitian if you are unsure.

Some of the foods on the ‘allowed’ lists may not be suitable in some of the Steps. Always check with your dietitian if you are unsure.

What fruit can I eat?

Foods allowed – limit to ONE portion per day (80 grams or 1 small handful). ALWAYS CHECK IF THESE NEED TO BE PURÉED

- Apples (peeled)
- Apricots (fresh, peeled)
- Bananas
- Guava (peeled and deseeded)
- Mango
- Melon (honeydew, cantaloupe, gallia)
- Nectarines (peeled)
- Papaya
- Pears (peeled)
- Peaches (peeled)
- Plums (peeled)
- Watermelon (no pips)

Other

- Fruit juice (no bits)
- Puréed, stewed or cooked fruit (without skins, pips or stones)
- Tinned fruit (all fruits)
- Fruit sauces and coulis with pips removed e.g. sieved raspberry coulis, apple sauce

Foods to avoid

- Ackee
- Blackberries
- Blackcurrants
- Blueberries
- Cherries
- Clementines
- Coconut
- Cranberries (fresh and dried)
- Dates
- Dried apricots
- Figs
- Grapefruit
- Grapes
- Jackfruit
- Kiwi
- Longan
- Lychee
- Mandarins
- Oranges
- Passion fruit
- Pineapple
- Pomegranate
- Prunes
- Raisins
- Raspberries
- Redcurrants
- Rhubarb
- Satsumas
- Strawberries

Other

- Fruit juice with bits
- Smoothies

What vegetables can I eat?

Foods allowed – limit to ONE portion per day (80 grams or 1 small handful). ALWAYS CHECK IF THESE NEED TO BE PURÉED

All vegetables need to be well cooked

- Aubergine (peeled and deseeded)
- Avocado
- Broccoli (no stalks)
- Butternut squash (peeled)
- Cabbage (white, green, red)
- Carrots (peeled)
- Cauliflower (no stalks)
- Celeriac
- Chilli purée
- Courgette (peeled)
- Cucumber (peeled and deseeded)
- Daikon (Asian radish)
- Garlic (roasted whole and squeezed as a purée)
- Garlic purée
- Gem squash (peeled)
- Ginger purée
- Horseradish purée
- Kimchi
- Lemongrass purée
- Marrow (peeled)
- Onion (well-cooked as a paste)
- Parsnips (peeled)
- Patty pan (peeled)
- Peppers (peeled and deseeded)
- Pumpkin
- Sauerkraut
- Shallots (well-cooked as a paste)
- Swede
- Swiss chard (leaves only, well-cooked)
- Tomato passata
- Tomatoes (peeled and deseeded)
- Turnips
- Smooth vegetable soups (made with allowed vegetables)
- Wasabi paste
- Wild garlic (well cooked)

Foods to avoid

- Asparagus
 - Baby corn
 - Bean sprouts
 - Beetroot
 - Bok choy
 - Broad beans
 - Brussels sprouts
 - Cavolo nero
 - Celery
 - Chicory
 - Chilli (fresh or dried)
 - Coleslaw
 - Edamame
 - Endive
 - Fennel
 - French beans
 - Garlic (whole, raw or undercooked)
 - Gherkins
 - Ginger (fresh)
 - Globe artichokes
 - Green beans
 - Jerusalem artichokes
 - Kale
 - Kohlrabi
 - Leeks
 - Lemongrass
 - Lettuce (all types e.g. gem, iceberg, round)
 - Mangetout
 - Mushrooms
 - Okra
 - Olives
 - Onion (whole, raw or undercooked)
 - Pak choi
 - Peas
 - Pickled onions
 - Radishes
 - Rocket
 - Runner beans
 - Salad leaves
 - Salad onions
 - Samphire
 - Savoy cabbage
 - Seaweed
 - Shallots (whole, raw or undercooked)
 - Soya beans
 - Spinach
 - Spring greens
 - Spring onions
 - Sugar snap peas
 - Sweetcorn
 - Sweetheart cabbage
 - Tomatoes (whole with skins and pips)
 - Wasabi beans
 - Watercress
- Other**
- All skins, pips and seeds
 - Tough stalks of vegetables e.g. cauliflower, broccoli
 - Raw vegetables
 - Soup with whole vegetables and beans e.g. minestrone

What starchy foods can I eat?

Breads and Cereals

Foods allowed	Foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bread sticks (plain)• Cereals e.g. Cocopops®, Cornflakes®, Frosties®, Rice Krispies®• Crackers and crispbreads that melt-in-the-mouth (without seeds and grains) e.g. butter puffs, Carrs® cheese melts, Cornish wafers, crisp bakes, Melba/French toast, Ritz®, TUC®• Flours that are low in fibre (to make sauces or cakes) e.g. buckwheat, cornflour, cornmeal, gram flour, potato flour, rice flour, white flour• Readybrek®	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bread of all types e.g. white, 50:50®, Best of Both®, wholemeal, brown, granary, seeded, bagels, baguettes, naan, pitta, rolls, sourdough, wraps• Bread products e.g. brioche, croissants, crumpets, hot-cross buns, muffins, pancakes, scones (cheese, fruit and plain), scotch pancakes, tea cakes• Breakfast bars e.g. Belvita®, Nutrigrain®• Cereal bars e.g. Nature valley®, Eat Natural®, Nakd®• Cereals made with wholemeal, wholegrain and bran e.g. All Bran®, Branflakes®, Cheerios®, Special K®, Weetabix®• Cereals containing dried fruit, seeds or nuts e.g. Crunchy Nut Cornflakes®, Fruit n Fibre®, granola, muesli, Sultana Bran®• Crackers and crispbreads made with wholemeal, wholegrain and seeds and that do not 'melt-in-the-mouth' e.g. corn cakes, cream crackers, oat cakes, rice cakes, Ryvita®, water biscuits• Flours that are high in fibre e.g. bran flour, chickpea flour, granary flour, wholemeal flour, wholegrain flour• Porridge and rolled oats

Potato, Rice and Pasta

Foods allowed. ALWAYS CHECK IF THESE NEED TO BE PURÉED	Foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gnocchi (white) with plenty of sauce● Grains: buckwheat, bulgur wheat, millet, pearl barley, quinoa, white couscous● Hash browns made without onions● Noodles: egg, kabuto, ramen, rice, soba, udon, vermicelli● Pasta: quinoa pasta, spelt pasta, white pasta● Polenta● Potatoes (peeled): sweet potatoes, white potatoes● Rice: basmati, jasmine, long grain, paella, risotto, white● Sago● Semolina● Tapioca● Yams (peeled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Amaranth● Farro● Freekeh● Hash browns (made with onions)● Pasta: Brown, wholemeal, wholegrain● Pastry● Potato skins● Rice: brown and wild● Stuffing● Waffles● Wholewheat giant couscous● Yorkshire pudding

What protein foods can I eat?

Foods allowed. ALWAYS CHECK IF THESE NEED TO BE PURÉED	Foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative meat products e.g. Beyond meat®, Birds Eye®, Quorn®, Richmond®• Eggs• Fish (fresh, frozen, tinned – no bones)• Hemp powder• Houmous (smooth)• Liver sausage• Meat and meat products• Nut butters (smooth)• Paté (smooth) e.g. smoked salmon, trout, tuna, chicken, duck liver, mackerel• Pea protein powder• Seitan• Soya mince• Spirulina powder• Tempeh• Tofu• Tahini	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beans e.g. borlotti, cannellini, kidney, soya, baked beans and broad beans• Coarse paté made with onions• Convenience items which contain whole grains and vegetables e.g. onions, peppers• Crunchy nut butters• Falafels• Fish bones and skin• Fish fingers• Fish in batter or breadcrumbs• Houmous (with onions or whole chickpeas)• Maca powder• Nuts e.g. almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia, peanuts, pecans, pinenuts, walnuts• Pulses e.g. lentils (red, green, brown, Puy), chickpeas, yellow split peas• Seeds e.g. chia, linseeds, poppy, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower• Wheatgrass powder

What dairy foods can I eat?

Foods allowed	Foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All types of milk e.g. cow's, goat's, sheep's• All milk alternatives e.g. almond, soya, oat, cashew, hazelnut, coconut, rice, hempseed, pea protein• Cream, sour cream, crème fraiche• Buttermilk• All types of cheese (without dried fruit and nuts)• Vegan cheese• Butter, margarine, spread• Smooth yoghurt• Smooth ice cream and sorbet• Custard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheese containing dried fruit or nuts• Ice cream and sorbet containing nuts, seeds and whole fruits• Yoghurt containing whole fruit, nuts, seeds or pips

What sweet treats can I eat?

Foods allowed. ALWAYS CHECK IF THESE NEED TO BE PURÉED	Foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boiled sweets, mints• Biscuits e.g. Biscoff®, bourbon creams, Club®, custard creams, ginger nuts, malted milk, Nice®, Oreo®, Penguin®, wafers, rich tea, shortbread, sponge fingers - dunked in a hot drink• Cakes made with white flour, polenta or ground almonds (without dried fruit or nuts) softened with cream or custard• Halva• Jaffa cakes• Jelly or milk jelly (without fruit)• Smooth milk, white or plain chocolate (without dried fruit and nuts) and 'melt-in-the-mouth' chocolates e.g. Kitkat®, Maltesers®, Wispa®	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biscuits containing dried fruit e.g. fig rolls, Garibaldi®• Biscuits made with wholemeal or wholegrain flour e.g. digestives, Hobnobs®• Cakes made with dried fruit and nuts e.g. hot cross buns, tea cakes, fruit scones• Cakes made with wholemeal or wholegrain flour• Cereal bars containing dried fruit and nuts• Chocolate with nuts and dried fruit• Crumpets, muffins• Flapjacks• Jelly made with fresh berries• Jelly sweets• Marshmallows• Mince pies• Nougat• Toffee

What savoury treats can I eat?

Foods allowed	Foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Melt-in-the-mouth crisps e.g. Cheese puffs, chipsticks, french fries, Pom Bears®, Pringles®, Quavers®, Skips®, Wotsits®, Walkers®● Melba or French toasts● Melt-in-the-mouth crackers e.g. butter puffs, Carrs® cheese melts, Cornish wafers, crisp bakes, mini cheddars, Ritz® or TUC® sandwich biscuits● Plain bread sticks● Plain poppadoms● Smooth dips e.g. sour cream, taramasalata, guacamole	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bombay Mix● Bread sticks with sesame seeds● Cheese straws● Crisps that do not melt-in-the-mouth e.g. Hula Hoops®, Kettle® chips, McCoy's® crinkle cut, Monster Munch®, NikNaks®, Snack-a-Jack®, tortilla chips, Twiglets®● Dips that contain whole tomatoes, cucumbers, onions e.g. salsa, tzatziki● Nuts and seeds● Popcorn● Stuffing● Vegetable, lentil, quinoa crisps

What condiments can I eat?

Foods allowed

- Apple sauce
- Arrowroot (ground)
- Baking powder
- Barbecue sauce
- Bicarbonate of soda
- Bovril®
- Brown sauce
- Chutney (smooth)
- Cocoa powder (no more than 10g per day)
- Curry sauces and pastes
- Dried herbs
- Egg white powder
- Garlic granules
- Gelatine
- Golden syrup
- Gravy granules
- Harissa
- Hemp powder
- Henderson's relish
- Hoisin sauce
- Honey
- Hazelnut spread
- Horseradish sauce
- Jam (smooth)
- Lemon curd
- Mango chutney (smooth)
- Maple syrup
- Marmalade (smooth)
- Marmite®
- Mayonnaise, vegan mayonnaise
- Miso paste
- Mustard – smooth (Dijon, English, French)
- Nasi goreng sauce
- Nut butters (smooth)
- Nutella®
- Nutritional yeast
- Onion powder
- Powdered spices
- Redcurrant jelly (smooth)
- Salad cream
- Salad dressing (smooth)
- Salt and pepper
- Soy sauce
- Sriracha
- Tabasco® sauce
- Tamari sauce
- Teriyaki sauce
- Tomato ketchup
- Treacle
- Vegemite®
- Wasabi paste
- Worcester sauce

Foods to avoid

- Candied peel
- Chutneys with whole pieces
- Fresh herbs
- Glacier cherries
- Jam with seeds
- Lime pickle
- Marmalade with peel
- Mincemeat
- Nut butters (crunchy)
- Piccalilli
- Pickles & relishes
- Salad dressing (with wholegrain mustard)
- Sweet chilli sauce
- Wholegrain mustard

Further reading/references

Cancer Research UK

- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/physically/bowel-problems/types/blocked-bowel-obstruction>
- <https://nutrition2me.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Nutritional-Management-of-Bowel-Obstruction.pdf>

British Dietetic Association

- <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/malnutrition.html>

Contact details

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact us.

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PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

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If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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