

Diet for Gastroparesis

What is gastroparesis?

Gastroparesis means your stomach empties slower than normal. This can happen due to damage or dysfunction of the nerves in the stomach. It will affect how you digest foods. The symptoms may vary day to day, and range from mild to severe.

What are the symptoms of gastroparesis?

- Nausea (sick feeling in your stomach)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Heartburn
- Bloating, belching
- Feeling full quickly
- Less desire to eat
- Weight loss
- Feeling tired
- Changes in blood sugar levels

What causes gastroparesis?

Gastroparesis has many causes. These include:

- Endocrine (gland) disorders, such as diabetes or Addison's disease (adrenal insufficiency)
- Previous stomach surgery
- Nervous system disorders, such as Parkinson's disease
- Medicines
- Ulcers or inflammation (swelling) of the stomach

In some cases, the cause is unknown.

How can I treat my gastroparesis?

Avoid large meals, solid foods and foods high in fat or fiber. These will stay in your stomach longer. Changing your diet may help you feel better. Here are some ideas:

- Eat 4 to 6 smaller meals per day
- Eat less fiber: 10 to 15 grams per day.
- Reduce fiber by:
 - peeling fruits and vegetables
 - cooking fruits and vegetables to a soft/mashable texture
 - choosing pureed (mashed up) fruits/vegetables, or drink fruit or vegetable juice
- Consume less fat by eating fewer high-fat foods. Eat less than 50 grams of fat per day. **Limit** deep-fried foods, bakery items and desserts. Choose lean meats.
- Higher-fat drinks, such as whole milk, do **not** often cause problems. These drinks can help you get enough calories, if you're having trouble eating enough and maintaining weight.
- Chew your food well. Try to chew foods until they're mashed up. Ground meats and pureed foods may be easier to digest.
- Sit up while eating. **Don't** lie down for at least 1 hour after a meal. You may need wait 3 to 4 hours, depending on your symptoms.
- Go for a slow walk after meals. Regular light exercise helps move food from the stomach. Regular physical activity also helps reduce stress, which can improve symptoms.

- Don't drink liquids with meals. Drink before or after a meal. Carbonated (fizzy) drinks may cause bloating.
- If food odors make you feel sick, it may help to eat cold or room-temperature foods.
- Don't smoke. Limit alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods and mint. These items can irritate your stomach and cause heartburn.

What else can I do?

- Keep a food diary to help you discover which foods cause problems for you.
- You may want to try a diet with liquids and pureed foods. These foods will empty from the stomach faster (see diet stages below).
- You can put most foods in a blender.
- You can make pureed/blenderized foods thinner by adding water, broth, juice or milk.
- Strained baby foods are an option if you don't want to blend foods or don't have a blender.
- If most of your diet is liquid, consider adding nutritional supplements like Boost, Ensure or Carnation Instant Breakfast. These will help increase calories.

Diet stages for gastroparesis

Stage 1: Liquids

Drink liquids slowly through the day. Drink only liquids that agree with you. Try low-fat options if higher-fat liquids are causing symptoms.

Stage 2: Pureed foods

Puree stage 3 and stage 4 foods, or you can buy pureed foods like baby foods.

Stage 3: Soft foods lower in fat and fiber

Choose foods that are soft (mashable with a fork). These foods will be lower in fiber. Limit your fat intake to less than 40 grams per day.

Stage 4: Solid foods, reduced fat/fiber

Begin to eat more solid foods. This is a long-term eating plan. Limit high-fiber foods. Ask your registered dietitian for a list of high/low fiber foods. Limit fat to 50 grams per day. If you need to gain weight, a low-fat diet is not advised. Talk with your registered dietitian about adding extra calories.

Sample Meal Plan:

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup Cream of Wheat, 1 slice white toast, 1 tablespoon peanut butter
Morning snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 ounces low-fat yogurt, ½ banana
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 ounces chicken or fish, ½ cup cooked squash, ½ cup mashed potatoes
Evening snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup low-fat pudding or frozen yogurt
Liquids between meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable juice, Crystal Light, water mixed with fruit juice
Total menu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1630 calories: 10 grams of fiber 49 grams of fat 71 grams of protein