



UVA Nutrition Services

**UVA Digestive
Health Center**

GASTROPARESIS DIET TIPS

Introduction

Gastroparesis means stomach (gastro) paralysis (paresis). The word gastroparesis is used when a patient's stomach empties too slowly. Everyone's stomach is unique, so the ability of the stomach to empty can vary from one patient to another. Most patients are able to swallow *and empty* their saliva (about 1 quart per day) and also empty the natural stomach juices they make (about 2-3 quarts per day). Symptoms can vary from week-to-week or even day-to-day.

The guidelines presented here are designed to give tips for diet modification. In addition, lots of suggestions are provided for food and drinks. The suggestions are based on experience and not science, as there are no studies that have been done that demonstrate what foods are better tolerated than others by patients with gastroparesis. It is recommended that anyone with gastroparesis see a doctor and Registered Dietitian to seek advice on how to maximize their nutritional status.

The Basics

Volume

The larger the meal, the slower the stomach will empty. It is important to decrease the amount of food eaten at a meal, but in order to meet nutrient needs, patients will have to eat more often. Smaller, more frequent meals (6-8 or more if necessary) may allow patients to meet their needs.

Liquids Versus Solids

If decreasing the meal size and increasing the number of "meals" does not work, the next step is to switch over to more liquid-type calories. Liquids are better tolerated than solids. Liquids empty the stomach more easily than solids do. Pureed foods may be better tolerated also.

Fiber

Fiber (found in many fruits, vegetables and grains) may act to slow stomach emptying and fill the stomach up quickly, hence nutrient needs may not be met. For patients who have had a bezoar (an indigestible, concretion of foods and/or medications) in the past, a fiber restriction (including avoidance of over-the-counter fiber/bulking medicines) is worthwhile.

Fat

Although fat may slow stomach emptying in some patients, many can consume fat especially in the form of liquids. Although many clinicians restrict fat, my experience is that fat in the liquid form (as part of beverages such as whole milk, milkshakes, nutritional supplements, etc.) can be well tolerated by many. To take

fat out of the diet of a patient diet that is seriously malnourished is to remove a valuable source of calories. Unless a fat-containing food or fluid causes problems, fat should not be limited. It is often well tolerated, pleasurable, and it provides a great source of calories small amounts.

Medications

There are quite a few medications that can delay stomach emptying –ask your doctor if any of the medications you are on could be slowing down your stomach emptying.

Getting Started

- Eat at least six small meals per day; **avoid** large meals.
- Avoid solid foods high in fat or adding too much fat (see list below) to foods, however, liquid beverages containing fat are often tolerated just fine.
- Eat nutritious foods first before filling up on “empty calories” (i.e., candy, cakes, pastries, etc.)
- Chew foods well; especially meats (meats may be more tolerated if ground or puréed.)
- Avoid high fiber foods because they may be more difficult for your stomach to empty or may cause bezoar formation. A bezoar is a mixture of food fibers that may get stuck in the stomach causing it to not empty even more poorly.
- Sit up while eating and for at least 1 hour after finishing; consider taking a quiet walk after meals.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control. Let your doctor know if your blood sugar runs >200 on a regular basis.

Try Blenderized Food

Any food can be blenderized, but solid foods will need to be thinned with some type of liquid.

- **Meats, fish, poultry and ham:** Blend with broths, water, milk, vegetable or V-8[®] juice, tomato sauce, gravies.
- **Vegetables:** Blend with water, tomato juice, broths, strained baby vegetables.
- **Starches:** potatoes, pasta: Blend with soups, broth, milk, water, gravies; add strained baby meats, etc to add protein if needed. Consider using hot cereals such as cream of wheat or rice, grits, etc as your “starch” at lunch and dinner.
- **Fruits:** Blend with their own juices, other fruit juices, water, strained baby fruits.
- **Cereals:** Make with caloric beverage such as whole milk, soy or rice milk, juice, Ensure[®] or equivalent, etc., instead of water. Add sugars, honey, molasses, syrups, or other flavorings, butter or margarine for extra calories.
- **Mixed dishes:** Lasagna, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, chili, stews, hearty soups, chop suey – add adequate liquid of your choice, blend well and strain.

Always clean the blender well. Any food left in the blender for > 1-2 hours could cause food poisoning. If you do not have a blender, strained baby foods will work and can be thinned down if needed with milk, soy or rice milk, water, broth, etc.

Getting your Calories

When getting enough calories is a daily struggle...

- High calorie drinks are better than water (provides calories **AND** fluid); use peach, pear or papaya nectar, cranberry juice, orange juice, Hawaiian Punch[®], Hi C[®], lemonade, Kool-Aid[®], etc.
- Fortify milk by adding dry milk powder – 1-cup powder to 1-quart milk.
- Use whole milk or evaporated milk (if tolerated) instead of skim or 2% for drinking and preparing “cream type” soups, custards, puddings, and milkshakes.
- Add instant breakfast, protein powder, dry milk powder, or other flavored powders or syrups to whole milk or juices.
- Make custards and puddings with eggs or egg substitutes (such as Eggbeaters[®]).
- Try adding ice cream, sherbets, or sorbets to ready-made liquid nutritional supplements such as Nutra-shakes[®], Ensure[®] or Boost[®] or others.

FOOD SUGGESTIONS FOR GASTROPARESIS

STARCHES

Breads

White bread
(including
French/Italian)
Bagels (plain or egg)
English muffin
Plain roll
Pita bread
Tortilla (flour, corn)
Pancake
Waffle

Cereals

Quick oats (plain)
Grits
Cream of Wheat
Cream of Rice
Puffed wheat and rice
cereals such as:
(Cheerios[®], Sugar
Pops[®], Kix[®], Rice
Krispies[®], Fruit
Loops[®], Special K[®],
Cocoa Krispies[®],
cornflakes, Cocoa
Puffs[®])

Grains/Potatoes

Rice (plain) - any
Pasta, macaroni
(plain)
Bulgur wheat
Barley
Potatoes (no skin,
plain)
(all kinds-sweet,
yams,
etc.)
French fries (baked)

Crackers

Arrowroot
Breadsticks
Matzoh
Melba toast
Oyster
Pretzels
Saltines
Soda
Zwieback

MEATS – GROUND OR PUREED

Beef

Baby beef
Chipped beef
Flank steak
Tenderloin
Plate skirt steak
Round (bottom or top)
Rump

Veal

Leg
Loin
Rib
Shank
Shoulder

Pork

Lean pork
Tenderloin
Pork chops
97% fat-free ham
Poultry (skinless)
Chicken
Turkey (all)
Wild Game
Venison
Rabbit
Squirrel
Pheasant (no skin)

Fish/Shellfish (fresh or frozen, plain, no breading)

Crab
Lobster
Shrimp
Clams
Scallops
Oysters
Tuna (in water)

Cheese

Cottage cheese
Grated Parmesan

Other

Eggs (no creamed
or fried), egg
white, egg
substitute
Tofu
Strained baby
meats (all)

VEGETABLES (Cooked, and if necessary, blenderized/strained)

Beets
Tomato sauce

Tomato juice
Tomato paste or

Carrots
Strained baby

Mushrooms
Vegetable juice

puree		vegetables	
FRUITS AND JUICES (Cooked and, if necessary, blenderized/strained)			
Fruits Applesauce Banana Peaches (canned) Pears (canned) Strained baby fruits (all)	Juices (all) Apple Apple cider Cranberry (sweetened) Cranberry (low calorie) Grape Grapefruit Mango	Nectars (apricot, peach, pear) Orange-grapefruit Orange Pineapple-orange Papaya Pineapple Prune	
MILK PRODUCTS (if tolerated)	OTHER CARBOHYDRATES	SOUPS	FAT (if tolerated)
Buttermilk Yogurt (frozen) Evaporated milk Smooth yogurts (without fruit pieces) Milk powder Milk – any as tolerated	Angel food cake Animal crackers Custard/pudding Gelatin/ Jell-O® Ginger snaps Graham crackers Popsicles Plain sherbet Vanilla wafers	Broth Bouillon Strained creamed soups (with milk or water)	Cream cheese Mayonnaise Margarine Butter Vegetable oils Smooth peanut butter – small amounts
BEVERAGES		SEASONINGS/GRAVIES	SWEETS
Hot cocoa (made with water or milk) Kool-Aid® Lemonade Tang® and similar powdered products Gatorade® or Powerade® Soft drinks Coffee Tea		Cranberry sauce (smooth) Fat-free gravies Molly McButter®, Butter Buds® Mustard Ketchup Vegetable oil spray Soy sauce Teriyaki sauce Tabasco® sauce Vanilla and other extracts Vinegar	Gum Gum drops Hard candy Jelly beans Lemon drops Rolled candy (such as Lifesavers®) Marshmallows Seedless jams and jellies
The following foods have been associated with bezoar* formation; avoid if you have been told you have had a bezoar.			
Apples Berries Coconuts	Figs Oranges Persimmons	Brussels sprouts Green beans Legumes	Potato peels Sauerkraut

*A Bezoar is a mixture of food residues that can accumulate in a stomach that does not empty well.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ◆ **Gastroparesis & Dysmotilities Association:** www.digestivedistress.com
- ◆ **University of Virginia Health System, Digestive Health Center**
 - www.GInutrition.virginia.edu
 - **Scroll down to "Articles in Practical Gastroenterology"**
 - **August 2005 (article on gastroparesis)**
- ◆ **Find more extensive diet suggestions for gastroparesis at www.uvahealth.com**
 - **Click on "Services" "Digestive Health" "Health and Prevention" (in the left-hand column) scroll down to "Stomach Paralysis – Gastroparesis Diet Tips and Recipes"**