



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 foods and fluids. 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, our experience is that fat in liquid form (as part of beverages such as whole milk, milkshakes, nutritional supplements, etc.) is often well tolerated. To restrict fat in the diet of a patient who is severely malnourished is to remove a valuable calorie source. Unless a fat-containing food or fluid clearly seems problematic, fat should not be limited. It is often well tolerated, pleasurable, and it provides a great source of calories relative to other foods.

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 six or more small meals per day and avoid large meals.
- Avoid solid foods high in fat or adding too much fat to foods, however, liquid beverages containing fat are often tolerate 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 and not empty well (similar to a hairball in a cat).
- 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, chop suey – add adequate liquid of your choice, blend well and strain.
- If you do not have a blender, strained baby foods will work and can be thinned down as needed with milk, soy or rice milk, water, broth, etc.
- Always clean the blender well. Any food left in the blender for > 1-2 hours could cause food poisoning.

Getting your Calories

When getting enough calories is a daily struggle...

- High calorie drinks are better than water (provide calories **AND** fluid); use peach, pear or papaya nectar, cranberry juice, orange juice, Hawaiian Punch[®], Hi C[®], lemonade, Kool-Aid[®].
- 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, sorbets to ready-made supplements such as Nutra-shakes[®], Ensure[®] or Boost[®].

FOOD RELATED TIPS FOR GASTROPARESIS

STARCHES

Breads

White bread
(including French/Italian)
Bagels (plain or egg)
English muffin
Plain roll
Pita bread
Tortilla (flour)
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
Crispies[®])

Grains/Potatoes

Rice (plain)
Pasta (plain)
Bulgur
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)
Duck (no skin)
Goose (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 puree

Carrots
Strained baby vegetables (all)

Mushrooms
Vegetable juice

FRUITS AND JUICES (Cooked and, if necessary, blenderized/strained)

Fruits

Applesauce
Banana
Peaches (canned)
Pears (canned)
Strained baby fruits (all)

Juices (all)

Apple cider
Cranberry (sweetened)
Cranberry (low calorie)
Nectars (apricot, peach, Pear)

Orange-grapefruit
Pineapple-orange
Pineapple
Apple
Grape
Grapefruit
Prune

Orange
Papaya

MILK PRODUCTS (if tolerated)

Buttermilk
Yogurt (frozen)
Evaporated milk
Yogurt (without fruit pieces)
Milk powder
Milk – any as tolerated

OTHER CARBOHYDRATES

Angel food cake
Animal crackers
Custard/pudding
Gelatin
Ginger snaps
Graham crackers
Popsicles
Plain sherbet
Vanilla wafers

SOUPS

Broth
Bouillon
Strained creamed soups (with milk or water)

FAT (if tolerated)

Cream cheese
Mayonnaise
Margarine

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 extract Vinegar	Gum Gum drops Hard candy Jelly beans Lemon drops Rolled candy (such as Lifesavers®) Marshmallows Seedless jams and jellies
<i>The following foods have been associated with bezoar* formation; avoid if you have been told you have had a bezoar.</i>		
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.

RESOURCES

- ◆ **Gastroparesis Dysmotility Association:**
www.digestivedistress.com
- ◆ **University of Virginia Health System, Digestive Health Center**
 - To Access the GI Nutrition Page at UVAHS, go to:
 - § 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”