

Low Fiber Diet Prior to Colonoscopy

Hello everyone, if you are reading this, it probably means you are about ready to have a colonoscopy. The purpose of being on this diet for a few days before the colonoscopy is to make it a little easier to clean out the colon completely when you actually do the prep the day before the exam. Many patients ask about this special diet. Our patients who love eating greens and whole grains dread this diet. I thought I would shed some light on the low fiber diet and let you know what you should try and eat the week before the colonoscopy. So let's get started...

Definition of Fiber

Fiber is the part of fruits, vegetables and grains not digested by your body. A low-fiber diet restricts these foods. As a result, the amount of undigested material passing through your large intestine is limited and stool bulk is lessened. A low-fiber diet may be recommended for a number of conditions or situations. It is sometimes called a restricted-fiber diet.

Your doctor may prescribe a low-fiber diet if:

- You are prepping for a colonoscopy
- You have narrowing of the bowel due to a tumor or an inflammatory disease
- You have had bowel surgery
- You are having treatment, such as radiation, that damages or irritates your digestive tract
- You have a slow moving stomach, called gastroparesis

Details of the Diet

A low-fiber diet limits the types of vegetables, fruits and grains that you can eat. Occasionally, your doctor may also want you to limit the amount of milk and milk products in your diet. Milk doesn't contain fiber, but it may contribute to discomfort or diarrhea. If you're eating a low-fiber diet, be sure to read food labels. Foods you might not expect — such as yogurt, ice cream, cereal and even beverages — can have added fiber. Look for foods that have no more than 1 gram of fiber in a serving.

Foods that are generally allowed on a low-fiber diet include:

- White bread without nuts and seeds
- White rice, plain white pasta, and crackers
- Refined hot cereals, such as Cream of Wheat, or cold cereals with less than 1 gram of fiber per serving
- Pancakes or waffles made from white refined flour
- Most canned or well-cooked vegetables and fruits without skins or seeds
- Fruit and vegetable juice with little or no pulp, fruit-flavored drinks, and flavored waters
- Tender meat, poultry, fish, eggs and tofu
- Milk and foods made from milk — such as yogurt, pudding, ice cream, cheeses and sour cream — if tolerated
- Butter, margarine, oils and salad dressings without seeds

You should avoid:

- Whole-wheat or whole-grain breads, cereals and pasta
- Brown or wild rice and other whole grains, such as oats, kasha, barley and quinoa
- Dried fruits and prune juice
- Coconut and popcorn
- Raw fruit, including those with seeds, skin or membranes, such as berries
- Raw/ undercooked vegetables, including corn
- Dried beans, peas and lentils
- Seeds and nuts and foods containing them, including peanut butter and other nut butters

Here is an example of what you should intend to eat:

Breakfast Ideas

- Eggs and pancakes
- White bread toasted with butter and jelly
- Cream of wheat
- Flour tortilla with eggs, rice cheese and salsa
- Drink lots of water

Lunch Ideas

- Flour tortilla with rice cheese and salsa
- Sandwich of canned tuna/salmon with mayonnaise on white bread
- Chicken sandwich with mayonnaise on white bread
- Low fiber canned soup with crackers
- Drink lots of water

Snack Ideas

- Yogurt, without seeds or nuts
- Applesauce
- Slices of cheese with crackers
- Cottage cheese
- Drink lots of water

Dinner

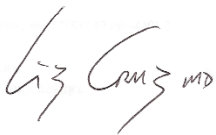
- Salmon, halibut, mahi, tuna, swordfish with white rice and canned green beans
- Tofu/chicken with white rice, Bragg's Aminos and canned asparagus
- Spaghetti with red sauce, white dinner roll with soy butter
- Drink lots of water

Prepare all foods so that they're tender. Good cooking methods include simmering, poaching, stewing, steaming and baking. Try to avoid roasting, broiling and grilling — methods that tend to make foods dry and tough. You may also want to avoid fried foods and spices.

Watch for the fact that you may have fewer bowel movements and smaller stools while you're following a low-fiber diet. To avoid constipation, it is very important that you drink lots of water during this time, unless for some reason you are on a fluid restriction.

Keep in mind, this is not a diet you want to stay on for long periods of time. The low-fiber diet makes it difficult to meet nutritional needs. If you find your day-to-day diet resembles what I have above please let us know so we can counsel you on healthier alternatives.

With Love,



Liz Cruz, M.D.