

Fiber Intake for People with Ileostomies

If you have an ileostomy you may have been told not to eat high fiber foods. In some cases, you may also have been told to take fiber supplements. It is important to understand that there are two kinds of fiber and how each one may affect how your ileostomy works.

Soluble fiber

Soluble fiber is found in the soft parts of many fruits and vegetables, such as the white, fleshy part of an apple. Soluble fiber absorbs water, turns into a gel, and slows the digestive system. It also helps keep stool soft to help it move more easily through your body. Things with soluble fiber include; psyllium products such as FiberCon or Metamucil and foods such as applesauce, and bananas.

People with ileostomies can benefit from taking in soluble fiber. Your health care team may tell you to take fiber tablets or fiber supplements, such as Benefiber, to help slow your digestion and prevent dehydration.

Insoluble fiber

Insoluble fiber is found in the rinds or stringy parts of fruits and vegetables, such as the outer peel or the skin of an apple. Insoluble fiber is called insoluble because it does not change when water is added to it. Insoluble fiber helps people who do not have an ileostomy to have regular bowel movements and firm stools. Examples of foods with a lot of insoluble fiber include broccoli, corn, celery, cashews, pineapple, and raisins. Foods with a lot of insoluble fiber are sometimes called “high residue” or “roughage.”

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

People with ileostomies are at risk for a problem called food blockage of the stoma. They must use care when eating foods with a large amount of insoluble fiber. People with ileostomies should limit the amount of insoluble foods they eat at one time. It is important to chew these types of foods really well to reduce your risk of a blockage.

Fluids

Fluid intake is always important for digestion and helps prevent dehydration. Water works together with soluble fiber to help food move smoothly through the digestive system. It is very important for patients using fiber supplements to be well hydrated. Drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day to stay hydrated.