Low-Fructose Diet

Patient Education

What Is Fructose?

Fructose is a natural sugar found in fruit, fruit juices, honey, and agave syrup. It is also found in some vegetables and wheat products in another form called fructans (long chains of fructose sugar). High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is another form of fructose sometimes added to processed foods.

What Is Fructose Intolerance?

Fructose intolerance, also called fructose malabsorption, happens when the body has trouble taking in fructose from food. This can happen when a person eats more fructose than their body can absorb, often more than 25 grams in one meal.

What Are Common Symptoms?

When the body cannot absorb fructose, it reaches the large intestine. Bacteria in the intestine break it down and make gas which can cause abdominal pain, gas and burping, and bloating. Fructose can also pull extra water into the large intestine. This can make the gut move faster and cause diarrhea (loose or watery poop). Some people may also have heartburn, tiredness, headaches, trouble thinking clearly, low mood, weight loss, or sugar cravings.

How Is Fructose Intolerance Diagnosed?

Anyone can have trouble absorbing fructose, but it is more common in people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or other digestive problems. A hydrogen breath test is used to check for fructose intolerance. A positive (abnormal) test may mean you need a low fructose diet.

What Is a Low Fructose Diet?

A low-fructose diet means eating less fructose to help reduce symptoms. It limits or avoids certain foods, such as:

- Foods with more fructose than other natural sugars
- Foods that have more than 3 grams of fructose
- Foods with lots of fructans

Other Important Sugars

- **Glucose:** a natural sugar that helps the body absorb fructose. Foods with equal amounts of glucose and fructose are often easier to digest. Foods with more glucose than fructose may be easier on your gut. Eating a food with extra glucose along with a food high in fructose may help reduce symptoms.
- **Sugar (sucrose):** also known as table sugar. It has equal amounts of glucose and fructose. Small amounts may be easier to tolerate, but large amounts may cause symptoms.
- **Sugar alcohols:** often used in “diet” and sugar-free foods like gum, mints, and cough drops. Common types include sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, and isomalt. They do not contain fructose but can make it harder for the body to absorb fructose. It may help to avoid them.

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- **Sugar substitutes:** sweeteners such as aspartame, Splenda, and Equal. They do not contain fructose. However, some people may still have trouble tolerating them.

Low-Fructose Diet guidelines:

Step 1: Elimination Phase (2–6 weeks)

- Avoid foods high in fructose until your symptoms improve. This usually takes a few weeks.

Step 2: Challenge Phase

- Once you feel better, slowly add foods back into your diet, one at a time.
- Wait 1–3 days between new foods and watch for symptoms.
- This helps you learn which foods and amounts you can tolerate.

Step 3: Maintenance Phase

- Keep foods you can tolerate in your diet. Limit or avoid only the foods that cause symptoms.

Low Fructose Diet Guidelines:

Use the food lists below as a guide for which foods to avoid, limit, or include. The goal is to eat as many different foods as you can while keeping symptoms under control.

FRUIT

All fruits contain some fructose, so limit even low-fructose fruits to 1–2 servings per day. One serving is ½ cup of fruit or 1 small piece of fruit.

Low (Ok to Eat)	Moderate (limit portions)	High (Avoid)
• Apricot • Avocado • Blueberries • Cantaloupe • Cherries • Coconut • Cranberries • Dragon fruit • Guava • Honeydew • Kiwi • Lemon • Lime • Lychee • Mandarin Orange • Orange • Papaya • Passionfruit • Peach, yellow • Persimmon • Pineapple • Plantain • Plum • Rhubarb	• Banana (firm, not overly ripe) • Blackberries (9 berries) • Cranberries, dried (2 tbsp) • Fruits in heavy syrup • Nectarine, yellow and white (1/2) • Peach, white (1/4 of medium) • Pomegranate (1/4 c) • Raspberries (1/2 c) • Strawberries (5 medium)	• Apples, applesauce • Banana (ripe) • Dried fruit (all types) • Fig Fruit juice • Grapes • Grapefruit • Mango • Pear • Watermelon

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VEGETABLES

How well you tolerate vegetables depends on how much you eat. Aim for about 1 cup per serving. Cooked vegetables may be better tolerated.

Low (Ok to Eat)	Moderate (limit portions)	High (Avoid)
• Bamboo shoots • Beetroot, raw, canned or pickled • Bell pepper, green • Bok choy • Broccoli florets • Cabbage • Carrot • Cassava • Cauliflower • Celery • Chili peppers • Corn • Cucumber • Eggplant • Green Beans • Jicama • Kohlrabi • Leeks • Lettuce, all types • Mushroom • Olives • Parsnip • Potato • Pumpkin • Radish • Rutabaga • Sauerkraut • Seaweed (nori) • Squash • Sugar Snap Peas • Tomatillo • Turnip • Yam	• Asparagus, 4 spears • Bell Pepper, red, orange, yellow (1/2 cup) • Broccoli stalk (1/2 cup) • Brussels sprouts (5 medium) • Okra (7 pods) • Squash; butternut, yellow summer and acorn (2/3 cup) • Sweet potato (2/3 cup) • Tomato (7 cherry, or ½ whole, 2/3 cup canned, 1.5 tbsp puree) • Zucchini (1/3 medium)	• Artichoke • Garlic • Green peas • Onion • Sweet pickles (if containing high fructose corn syrup) • Tomato paste • Tomato sauce

BEVERAGES

Low (Ok to Eat)	Moderate (limit portions)	High (Avoid)
• Diet soda • Soda with cane sugar • Gatorade, Propel • Sparkling water • Tea/coffee	• Fresh squeezed orange • Lemonade with cane sugar • 100% cranberry juice	• Fruit juice • Soda, tea, and lemonade with high fructose corn syrup • Powerade • Vitamin Water

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GRAINS/STARCHES

Low (Ok to Eat)	Moderate (limit portions)	High (Avoid)
• Amaranth • Arrowroot • Buckwheat • Corn meal • Millet • Oat • Rice • Quinoa • Sorghum • Tapioca • Teff • Popcorn	• Sourdough	• Wheat-based products: flour, pasta, bread, cereals, crackers, baked goods • Couscous • High fiber items (breads, granola bars, cereals) containing chicory root/inulin

CONDIMENTS/SEASONINGS/INGREDIENTS

Low (Ok to Eat)	Moderate (limit portions)	High (Avoid)
• Fats: butter, oil • Yellow mustard • Vinegars • Maple syrup • Herbs • Seasoning blends (without • onion/garlic)	• Jams/jellies with cane sugar • Ketchup with cane sugar	• Barbeque sauce • Honey mustard dressing • Jams/jellies with HFCS* • Ketchup with HFCS* • Pancake syrup with HFCS* • Salad dressing with HFCS*, honey, agave • Chicory root fiber or extract • Garlic salt/powder • Onion salt/powder • Inulin • Fructooligosaccharides (FOS) **High Fructose Corn Syrup*

SWEETENERS

Low (Ok to Eat)	Moderate (limit portions)	High (Avoid)
• Cane sugar/sucrose/table sugar • Brown sugar • Pure Maple Syrup • Powdered sugar (icing sugar) • Artificial sweeteners • Natural zero calorie sweeteners: Stevia, monk fruit	• Corn syrup • Molasses (1 teaspoon)	• Agave (syrup, nectar) • Crystalline Fructose • High Fructose Corn Syrup • Honey

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Helpful tips:

- **Read food labels.** Check the ingredient list for fructose, sugar alcohols, and other sweeteners.
- **Eat smaller amounts.** Eat low-fructose foods in small portions as part of a meal or snack.
- **Check medicines and vitamins.** Some may contain fructose or sorbitol. Ask your pharmacist or the manufacturer if you are unsure.
- **Keep a food diary.** Write down what you eat and any symptoms you notice. This is especially helpful when adding foods back into your diet.
- **Talk to your doctor about constipation.** Your doctor can help you find ways to manage it.

Low-Fructose Meal and Snack Ideas:

Breakfast

- Oatmeal topped with ½ cup fresh fruit, chopped nuts, cinnamon, and brown sugar.
- Egg omelet filled with baby spinach, red pepper and cheddar cheese.
- Scrambled eggs, 2 slices of bacon, and 1 slice sourdough toast with butter.
- Udi's white bread or Sourdough bread toasted with 2 tablespoons peanut butter.
- Cheerios (plain) cereal with milk and ½ cup blueberries
- Banana Walnut Pancakes: Bisquick Gluten free Pancake Mix prepared with ½ mashed banana, 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts and cook as directed. Top with pure maple syrup.
- Plain Greek yogurt topped with ¼ cup Bear Naked V'nilla Almond Fit Granola and ½ cup berries.
- Smoothie: ½ cup frozen blueberries, 3-4 ounces plain Chobani Greek yogurt blended until frothy

Lunch and Dinner

- Chicken or shrimp rice bowl: Rice, chicken or shrimp, lettuce, tomato, green scallion tops, cheddar cheese, lime juice, and olive oil
- Tuna salad: Tuna, mayonnaise, lemon juice, celery, and dill. Serve on sourdough bread or lettuce leaves.
- Ham and cheese sandwich: Use sourdough or Udi's white bread.
- Tomato basil pasta: Gluten-free pasta, fresh tomatoes, basil, and garlic-infused oil
- Stuffed peppers: Fill bell peppers with cooked ground turkey or beef, rice or quinoa, feta cheese, chives, and parsley. Bake until soft and fully cooked.

Snacks

- Rice cake with peanut butter
- Rice crackers, Swiss cheese slice and ½ cup grapes
- Hardboiled egg with gluten free pretzels
- String cheese with handful of almonds
- Chobani vanilla yogurt with ½ cup blueberries
- ½ sandwich with Udi's white bread with sliced chicken, lettuce and tomato slice.
- Crunchmaster multi-seed crackers, string cheese and an orange
- Cottage cheese with ½ cup pineapple
- Baby carrots and sliced cucumber

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- Banana slices with spoonful of almond butter or peanut butter.
- Go Macro protein replenishment peanut butter bar or 88 Acres chocolate and sea salt bar.
- Nature Valley crunchy granola bar (peanut butter, cinnamon, maple brown sugar, pecan).
- Boom Chicka Pop popcorn (sea salt, lightly sweet, kettle corn, white cheddar)

If you have any additional questions, please contact our office **612-871-1145**

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