

## Overview

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) includes two conditions: Crohn's Disease (CD) and Ulcerative Colitis (UC). Both cause swelling and soreness in the lining of your gut. CD can happen anywhere from your mouth to your anus. UC only happens in the large intestine (colon).

## Does Food Cause IBD?

No. Food does not cause IBD, and no special diet can cure it. But the foods you eat can help you feel better, give your body the nutrients it needs, and may help calm down some symptoms.

## What Is the Best Way to Eat With IBD?

Doctors recommend a Mediterranean-style diet for people with IBD. This means eating:

- Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains like oatmeal, brown rice, and whole wheat bread
- Healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, and avocado
- Fish, chicken, turkey, and eggs
- Beans and lentils

And eating less of:

- Fast food, chips, packaged snacks, and other highly processed foods
- Sugary drinks like soda, sweet tea, and sports drinks
- Red meat (like beef and pork) and processed meat (like hot dogs and bacon)
- Fried foods and foods with trans fats (look for "partially hydrogenated" on the label)

You do not need to cut out whole food groups. Only avoid a food if it makes your symptoms worse every time you eat it. Cutting out too many foods can make it hard to get the nutrition your body needs.

## **Fiber**

Fiber is good for your gut! It helps feed the healthy bacteria in your intestines. There are two kinds:

1. Soluble fiber (found inside fruits, oatmeal, and beans) — soaks up water and can help slow down diarrhea.
2. Insoluble fiber (found in fruit and vegetable skins, whole wheat, and seeds) — adds bulk and helps food move through your gut.

Most people with IBD can eat both kinds of fiber, especially when they are feeling well. If fiber bothers you, try these tricks instead of cutting it out:

- Cook your fruits and vegetables until they are soft
- Peel the skin off fruits and vegetables
- Blend foods into smoothies or soups
- Chew your food very well

If you have a narrowing in your intestine (called a stricture), talk to your doctor about which foods are safe for you. During a flare, you may need to eat softer, lower-fiber foods for a short time.

## **Fruits and Vegetables**

Fruits and vegetables are very important for your health. Try to eat many different kinds! Here are some tips:

- When you are feeling well, try both raw and cooked fruits and vegetables.
- When your symptoms are acting up, cook your veggies and peel your fruits to make them easier to digest.
- If seeds bother you, choose fruits without seeds or remove them.
- If a certain fruit or vegetable always makes you feel worse, it is okay to skip it — but try it again later when you are feeling better.

## **Grains**

Whole grains (like oatmeal, brown rice, and whole wheat bread) are part of a healthy diet and give you important nutrients and fiber. You do not need to avoid them unless they make your symptoms worse.

- When you are feeling well, try to include whole grains.
- During a flare, softer grains like well-cooked oatmeal, white rice, or white bread may be easier on your stomach.

## **What About Gluten?**

Unless your doctor has told you that you have celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity, you do not need to avoid gluten.

## **Dairy**

Many people with IBD think they need to avoid all dairy. But dairy foods like yogurt and cheese can be good sources of calcium and protein. If regular milk bothers you, try:

- Yogurt (the bacteria in yogurt help break down lactose)
- Hard cheeses like cheddar or Swiss (these have very little lactose)
- Lactose-free milk

Only avoid dairy if it truly makes your symptoms worse. Talk to your doctor if you are not sure.

## **Protein**

Protein helps your body heal, fight infection, and stay strong. Good sources include:

- Chicken, turkey, and fish
- Eggs
- Beans and lentils
- Tofu
- Nuts and nut butters (if tolerated)

Try to eat less red meat and processed meat (like hot dogs, sausage, and deli meat).

## **Fats**

Choose healthy fats like:

- Olive oil
- Avocado
- Nuts and seeds (if tolerated)
- Fish (salmon, tuna, sardines)

Avoid trans fats. Check food labels — if you see the words "partially hydrogenated," that food has trans fats. Also try to limit fried foods and fast food.

## **Beverages**

Staying hydrated is very important, especially if you have diarrhea. Here is what to drink:

- Water is the best choice for everyday hydration.
- If you have a lot of diarrhea, ask your doctor about an oral rehydration solution like Pedialyte. These have the right mix of salt and sugar to help your body absorb water.
- Avoid sugary drinks like soda, sweet tea, Gatorade, and Powerade. These have a lot of sugar and may make IBD symptoms worse.

How much water do you need? A good rule of thumb: take your weight in pounds, divide by 2, and that is about how many ounces of water to drink each day. For example, if you weigh 150 pounds, aim for about 75 ounces of water a day.

## **Vitamins and Minerals**

People with IBD sometimes do not get enough of certain vitamins and minerals. Your doctor should check your levels of:

- Vitamin D
- Iron
- Vitamin B12 (especially if you have had surgery on your small intestine)
- Folic acid (especially if you take certain IBD medicines)

You may need to take supplements. Ask your doctor what is right for you.

## **Eating During a Flare**

When your IBD is acting up, eating can feel really hard. Here are some tips:

- Eat smaller meals more often instead of 3 big meals.
- Choose softer, well-cooked foods.
- Peel fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Try bland foods like bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast if your stomach is very upset.
- This is a good time to talk to a dietitian who knows about IBD.

## **Keep a Food Journal**

Everyone with IBD is different. What bothers one person may be fine for another. Keeping a food journal can help you figure out which foods work for you and which ones do not. Write down what you eat and how you feel afterward. Look for patterns over time.

## **Work With a Dietitian**

A registered dietitian (RD) who knows about IBD can help you make a food plan that is right for you. They can help you make sure you are getting enough nutrients and not cutting out foods you do not need to avoid. Ask your doctor for a referral.

## **Resources**

- Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America: <http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/info/diet>
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (to find a dietitian): [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

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