

# Dietary advice for diabetes related gastroparesis

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Dietetics  
Information for Patients

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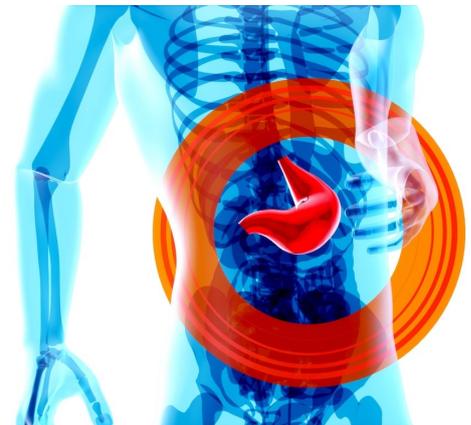
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## What is gastroparesis?

In simpler terms, gastroparesis means "stomach paralysis". It happens when the stomach cannot empty its contents properly, even though there is no blockage. This can happen if someone has poorly controlled diabetes. Diabetes is a condition that causes a person's blood sugar levels to rise above a healthy level. High blood sugar levels can damage the nerves that help the stomach work.

When this happens, food moves very slowly or sometimes stops moving through the body. Sadly, there is no cure for gastroparesis. There are different treatments available to help manage symptoms, keep a healthy weight and control blood sugar levels.



## What are the symptoms?

You may

- feel sick
- throw up
- have heartburn
- have stomach ache
- feel bloated
- and feel full too fast.

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These symptoms can make it hard to eat. They can lead to other problems like,

- having trouble controlling your blood sugar levels
- (losing more water that you take in) dehydrated
- losing weight without meaning to
- and not getting enough nutrients from your food.

## How can I manage my blood glucose levels?

New studies show that having a high blood glucose (or sugar) level of over 11mmols/L can make gastroparesis worse. This can slow down the stomach's ability to empty. To feel better, it is important to keep your diabetes under control. At most your blood sugar should be between 4 to 7mmol/l. This can be hard to reach and your healthcare team will work with you to find the best goal for you. It is a good idea to check your blood sugar levels often, mainly before and 2 hours after you eat. This will help you understand how different foods and drinks affect your blood sugar levels.

If you take pills or insulin to control your blood sugar, you might need to take them at different times. For example, you might need to take your medication or insulin after you eat so that your body has time to digest your food. Your healthcare team can help you work out the best way to take your medication. If you use an insulin pump, you can adjust the settings to deliver the insulin slowly over time or cancel the dose if needed.

Changing the size, texture, and how often you eat can also help you digest your food easier. But be careful, as changing what you eat and drink can affect how much carbohydrate you use up. This can affect your blood sugar levels.

## Which foods will affect my blood glucose levels?

The foods and drinks that affect our blood sugar levels the most are the ones that have carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are turned into sugar in our bodies. Some examples of carbohydrate foods and drinks include:



*(Sugary food)*

**Starches** - bread, chapatti, pasta, rice, potato and breakfast cereal

**Sugars** - table sugar, sweets, biscuits, cake, mithai, and natural sugars found in fruit and milk.



*(Starchy foods)*

Because gastroparesis can slow down digestion, it can also change how quickly our bodies absorb sugar from the foods and drinks we eat. This can make it harder to control our blood sugar levels.

## What changes can I make?

You can make changes to your diet. It might be a good idea to keep track of **what you eat and**

**drink and how you feel afterwards.** This can help you and your healthcare team see what foods and drinks may be causing problems for you.

### Diet changes:

- Instead of eating 3 big meals, try eating 6 small meals throughout the day.
- Avoid eating large amounts of fat (like butter, oil, and ghee) and protein (like meat, fish, and eggs) because they take longer to digest.
- Avoid foods that are high in fibre



### Foods to avoid

Nuts and seeds  
 Raw vegetables and salads  
 High fibre vegetables or starches e.g. green leafy vegetables, squash, potato skins  
 High fibre fruits e.g. berries, citrus fruits  
 Fruits with seeds or pips e.g. figs, passion fruit  
 Dried fruit  
 Bran/wholegrain cereals like Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, All Bran, Bran Flakes  
 Granary and seeded breads  
 Beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas  
 High fat or high protein foods e.g. pizza, curries, fatty meats cuts, pate, deep fried foods, cheese, pastry, pies, crisps, chocolate, cream, butter, ghee and oil  
 Fizzy drinks  
 Alcohol

- Try eating pureed or liquid meals like soups, stews, or smoothies.

Eating too much fibre can cause a problem called "bezoars," which is when fibre builds up in the stomach and causes blockages. To avoid this, choose foods that are low in insoluble fibre, like:

- Soft-cooked vegetables
- Peeled fruit
- Low-fibre breakfast cereals (like Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, and Special K)
- White bread
- White pasta
- White rice

### What do I need to do?

- Cut your food into smaller pieces and chew it well before swallowing.
- Try not to snack too much in the late evening.
- Sit up straight when you eat, and avoid lying down right away after a meal.

- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated or fizzy drinks, and smoking.
- Take a walk after eating to help speed up digestion.

## Are there any medications that can help?

There are different types of medications that your doctor may prescribe, including:

- Pro-kinetics: these can help move food through the stomach more easily.
- Anti-emetics: these can help reduce feeling sick or being sick.
- Proton-pump inhibitors: these can help balance stomach acid and reduce symptoms of acid reflux and heartburn.

If you think medication might be helpful for you, it is a good idea to speak with your diabetes team or your GP.

## What can I do to manage malnutrition (diet not containing the right amount of nutrients) and a low body weight?

Losing weight without meaning to can make you malnourished and dehydrated. This happens because you might be sick, lose your appetite or not get enough vitamins and minerals in your diet.

So what you can do is;

- buy vitamins and minerals from the pharmacy to help you get more of them.
- weigh yourself every 2 weeks if you are losing weight. If you are, you can change what you eat and drink to get more calories and gain weight
- have small and healthy snacks throughout the day
- and drink healthy drinks like milkshakes made with full fat milk

Your dietitian can give you special drinks that are healthy and help you gain weight. However, these might affect your blood sugar, so you might need to change your diabetes treatment.

If you want to know more about what to eat to keep a healthy weight, you can talk to your dietitian.

**Contact details:** If you have any queries please contact your Dietitian on: 0116 258 4919.

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