

Low residue diet



Information for patients

Sheffield Dietetics



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What is a low residue diet?

Residue refers to the part of your food that is not digested or absorbed and therefore remains in your bowel.

Why do I need to follow a low residue diet?

A low residue diet reduces the size and number of your stools. It can help to relieve abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhoea or flare-ups of digestive diseases such as diverticulitis, crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.

A low residue diet is also recommended when there is a risk that fibrous food may not pass through narrowed areas of the bowel.

How do I follow a low residue diet?

Food with a high fibre content should be reduced, for example wholegrain cereals, nuts or dried fruits. Please refer to the tables on the following pages for a full list of foods to avoid and suitable alternatives.

Fibre from fruits and vegetables can be reduced by peeling the skins and sieving or pureeing vegetables after cooking and blending fruit.

In extreme cases you may be advised to avoid all fruits and vegetables.

What can I have while I am in hospital?

You may be given a low residue menu card to complete or the choice to select low residue options from the normal menu. Please ensure any foods or snacks are on the suitable foods list over the page.

What foods are suitable for the low residue diet?

	Suitable foods	Foods to avoid
Meat and fish	All kinds of meat and fish	Skin and bones of fish, gristle, tough cuts of meat, stews, casseroles and pies containing the vegetables listed below
Alternative protein sources	Eggs, soya mince, tofu	All pulses such as chick peas, kidney beans, lentils or baked beans
Dairy foods	Milk, cheese, butter or margarine, plain or smooth yoghurts	Yoghurts or cheese containing fruit or pieces of nut
Breads and cereals	Cornflakes, rice krispies, white bread, white rice, white pasta, cream crackers, rice cakes, any food made from white flour such as pastry or Yorkshire pudding	Wholewheat breakfast cereals, for example Weetabix, Branflakes or Shredded Wheat, all cereals containing fruit or nuts, oats, porridge, wholemeal or wholegrain breads and foods made from wholemeal flour, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, bran and pearl barley
Potatoes	Boiled or roast potatoes without skins, mashed potatoes, the inside of baked potatoes	Potato skins

	Suitable foods	Foods to avoid
Vegetables	Small amounts of well cooked root vegetables	Tough stalks, onion, peas, sweetcorn, raw salad vegetables
Fruit	Tinned or stewed fruit, banana (maximum 1 small per day)	Tough skins, citrus fruit, dried fruit including prunes, seeds and pips
Nuts	None allowed	All nuts and food containing nuts, including coconut and marzipan
Cakes and biscuits	Sponge cakes made with white flour (no nuts or dried fruits), for example Swiss rolls with seedless jam; plain biscuits, for example rich tea, shortbread, custard creams, ginger nut, chocolate fingers, Jaffa cakes	Flapjacks, puddings or cakes made with wholemeal flour or dried fruit, for example fruit scones, mince pies, fruit crumble Biscuits made with wholemeal flour, oats, nuts or fruit, for example hobnobs, digestives, fig roll, fruit shortcake
Confectionery	Chocolate, fudge or toffee without dried fruit or nuts, boiled sweets, mints, chewy sweets	Chocolate and toffee made with dried fruits or nuts, popcorn, cereal bars

	Suitable foods	Foods to avoid
Miscellaneous	Sugar, syrup, evaporated milk, seedless jam and marmalade, honey, lemon curd, custard, ice cream, jelly, milk puddings, salt, pepper, gravy, stock cubes	Jam and marmalade with seeds and peel, herbs with stalk and leaves, pickles and chutneys, chunky soups
Drinks	Teas, coffee, smooth fruit juice, squash, water	Fruit juice with 'bits' Fruit smoothies

Are there any other dietary considerations?

Every person reacts differently to different foods so it is important that you assess your own tolerance to these foods. Here are some tips to help you:

- Eat regular meals
- Chew food well
- Spicy foods can cause discomfort so have these in moderation
- High fat foods can increase diarrhoea or discomfort (only limit these if they cause discomfort or diarrhoea since they can be helpful to include if you have a poor appetite)
- Try having 1 small glass of smooth fruit juice daily to increase your vitamin intake
- Caffeine and alcohol can irritate the bowel. Follow government guidelines on the recommended units of alcohol per day, and try limiting caffeinated drinks to 2-3 per day

Coping with a poor appetite whilst following a low residue diet

Here are some tips and hints for how to cope with a poor appetite whilst following a low residue diet.

- Eat little and often, aim for 5-6 small meals per day
- Choose full fat options of dairy products
- Add extra butter to food such as toast, mashed potato, or the inside of a jacket potato
- Use extra oil in cooking or drizzle over pasta
- Mix in cheese to foods such as mashed potato, scrambled eggs, pasta, soup, sauces and add extra to snacks like cheese on toast, or as an extra sandwich filling
- Add 1 tablespoon of double cream to food such as soup or mashed potato
- Make a fortified milk by adding 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to a pint of full fat milk. Add a small amount of the milk to the milk powder to make a paste, then mix into the rest of the milk. This can then be used throughout the day in hot drinks, on cereals, in cooking or drunk on its own
- Aim to use at least one pint of full fat milk or fortified milk per day
- Choose full sugar drinks
- Add extra sauce to meals, for example cheese sauce or hollandaise sauce
- Add seedless jam / honey or syrup to milk puddings
- Have a pudding after meals

Suitable high calorie snacks:

- Crackers and cheese
- Malted milk drink or a hot chocolate (made with fortified milk) with a biscuit
- Potato based crisps

- Chocolate
- Full fat smooth yoghurt
- Sweets
- Crumpet with butter, seedless jam or smooth peanut butter
- A piece of cake with or without cream or evaporated milk
- Plain scone with cream / butter / seedless jam

If you are diabetic, speak with your dietitian for advice as some of these foods may not be suitable.

Example meal plan for a low residue diet

These are example meal plans designed to give ideas on meal choices. They are not to be followed indefinitely.

Breakfast

Scrambled eggs on white toast or cornflakes with milk

Mid morning

Smooth yoghurt

Lunch

Strained soup and 1 ham or cheese sandwich on white bread

Pudding: Rice pudding or ice cream and tinned fruit

Mid afternoon

Shortbread biscuits x 2 or rice cakes with cottage cheese

Evening meal

Macaroni cheese or tuna / chicken pasta bake (use a smooth tomato sauce)

Supper (optional)

Cheese and crackers or malted milk drink or a hot chocolate made with milk

Example meal plan for a low residue diet (whilst having a poor appetite)

Breakfast

Scrambled eggs on white toast (mix 1 tablespoon of double cream into eggs) or cornflakes with fortified full fat milk

Mid morning

Full fat smooth yoghurt

Lunch

Strained soup and 1 ham and cheese sandwich on white bread

Pudding: Rice pudding with seedless jam

Mid afternoon

Custard cream biscuits x 4 and 1 glass of fortified full fat milk or a milky coffee

Evening meal

Macaroni cheese or tuna / chicken pasta bake (use a smooth tomato sauce) and add extra full fat cheese

Pudding: Apple crumble and custard or ice cream (use white flour not oats)

Supper

Hot chocolate made with fortified full fat milk

Crumpet, scotch pancake or a slice of toast with butter / seedless jam / smooth peanut butter

What if I need to follow a low residue diet long term?

A low residue diet does not always provide you with all the nutrients necessary to remain healthy. Please check with your doctor or dietitian how long you need to follow this diet for. You may need a complete A-Z vitamin and mineral supplement if it is for longer than 4 weeks.

Patient's name

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This information has been given to you by

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Contact number

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