

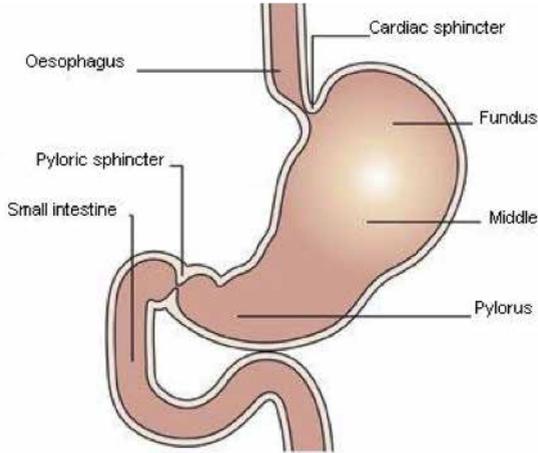
# Dietary management of Gastroparesis

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

The information in this leaflet tells you what Gastroparesis is. It gives you advice on how you can improve your symptoms if you suffer with this condition.

## How does the stomach normally function?

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The stomach mixes and breaks down food into a liquid mixture, which is then moved down towards a valve called the pyloric sphincter. When this sphincter relaxes, the mixed food passes into the intestine for further digestion.

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## What is Gastroparesis?

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Gastroparesis is a chronic (long-term) condition in which the stomach cannot empty itself in the normal way.

It means food passes through the stomach more slowly than usual, leading to symptoms such as:

- feeling full very quickly when eating
- nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- bloating
- abdominal (tummy) pain or discomfort
- heartburn

These symptoms can be mild or severe, and tend to come and go.

## Why have I got Gastroparesis?

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Gastroparesis is thought to be the result of a problem with the nerves and muscles controlling the emptying of the stomach. If these nerves are damaged, the muscles of your stomach may not work properly and the movement of food from the stomach can slow down.

In many cases, the cause is unknown – this is known as idiopathic gastroparesis.

## How do I treat Gastroparesis?

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Gastroparesis cannot usually be cured, but dietary changes and medical treatments can help control the condition. Your GP or consultant will talk to you about which medications or procedures might help. **If you smoke, it should help your symptoms if you stop.**

The goals of dietary treatment are to:

- reduce symptoms
- maintain an adequate nutritional intake
- maintain an optimal weight

## Can changing my diet improve my condition?

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There is very little research on what dietary changes help improve gastroparesis therefore the information in this leaflet is mostly based on clinical experience. People may respond differently to dietary changes and your dietitian will be able to provide advice to suit your own individual intolerances or difficulties with specific foods.

You may find these tips helpful:

- **instead of three meals a day, try more frequent, smaller meals** – this will mean there is less food in your stomach and it will be easier to pass through your system
- **try soft foods**, which are easier to digest
- **sit up straight at mealtimes and chew food well** before swallowing
- **sip non-fizzy liquids** with each meal. **Drink most of your fluid between meals** rather than with meals.
- **avoid alcohol**
- **choose foods which are low insoluble fibre**\*e.g. cornflakes, rice pops, white bread, white pasta, white rice, peeled potatoes.
- **avoid having large portions of fat**. Foods which contain 17.5g fat per 100g or more are considered high in fat. Foods containing less than 3g fat per 100g are considered low in fat.
- **foods which are very hot or very cold may aggravate symptoms**
- **sit or walk after eating** to help digestion, rather than lying down
- **aim for good glycaemic control** if you are diabetic

- **have milky drinks, smoothies or supplement drinks between meals**, rather than other drinks

\*Insoluble fibre is often known as 'roughage'. It is found in wholemeal bread and pasta, as well as the skins, pips, stalks and seeds of fruit and vegetables, and nuts and seeds.

## Should I avoid any foods?

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Some foods are more difficult to digest e.g. foods which are high in fibre, high in fat, high in protein or not easily chewed. Therefore, it is a good idea to avoid the following foods;

- Nuts and seeds
- Raw vegetables
- Vegetables that are higher in fibre e.g. green leafy vegetables, squash, potato skins
- Higher fibre fruit e.g. berries, citrus fruits and grapes
- Fruit with seeds, skins or pips e.g. figs, passion fruit, raspberries, apples and pears
- Dried fruit
- Fizzy drinks and alcohol
- Coffee
- Bran/ wholegrain cereals e.g. Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies
- Granary and seeded breads
- Beans and pulses
- Tough meat and skin or rind on meat e.g. bacon rind, chicken skin, pork crackling
- Solid meals that are very high in fat or protein e.g. deep fried items, large portions of meat

## **Try these foods instead:**

- Soups, especially if blended
- Smoothies
- Soft, well cooked vegetables
- Ground, minced or pureed meat
- Fish
- Dairy foods (milk, yoghurt, custard etc)
- Eggs
- Peeled fruits without pith, pips or seeds
- Fruit juices (without pulp)
- Milky drinks
- Low fibre breads and cereals e.g. white bread, cornflakes, rice pops

## **What happens next?**

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The extent to which you change your diet will depend on your symptoms. If your symptoms fluctuate then your diet may need to keep changing too.

If you have a restricted diet it is a good idea to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement to prevent nutritional deficiencies.

Some people with severe gastroparesis may be advised to have a part or even totally liquid diet. This is because the stomach is often able to empty liquids normally even in people with gastroparesis. It is important that you are advised properly on a liquid diet as it is difficult to get all the nutrients you need. You may need to take nutritional supplements to maintain your weight and nutrition.



## Contact details

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If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Dietetic Department at the address below:

The Royal Surrey County NHS Foundation Trust  
Department of Nutrition & Dietetics  
Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XX.

**Switchboard telephone:** 01483 571122 ext 4202

**Direct line:** 01483 464119

**Fax:** 01483 464868

**Email:** [rsch.dietitians@nhs.net](mailto:rsch.dietitians@nhs.net)

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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