

# Eating Well to Lower the Risk of a Bowel Obstruction

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There are many causes of bowel obstruction that are not caused by your diet. The tips below may help prevent an obstruction in some people. These tips have not been proven to help all people at risk for obstruction, but they may help decrease your risk. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

- A bowel obstruction may be caused by a narrowing of the intestine (bowel). This can happen in areas where there is swelling, tumours, scar tissue, or hernias in the bowel. It can also happen when there are problems with the muscles or blood flow of the bowel.
- Most bowel obstructions happen in the small intestine. However, tumours and the twisting of the bowel around scar tissue can also happen in the colon.
- Certain foods have large amounts of dietary fibre that we cannot digest (examples: cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignans). Limiting these foods may decrease the risk of food causing a bowel obstruction.

## Tips

- Chew foods well.
- Eat in a relaxed setting and eat slowly.
- Eat smaller amounts of food more often throughout the day.
- Drink 2000 to 2500 mL (8 to 10 cups) of fluids every day.
- Limit fluids with caffeine (examples: coffee, tea, colas) and alcohol, as they can irritate the bowel.
- Take a complete multi-vitamin with mineral supplements every day to make sure you get enough nutrients.
- Some people may be able to tolerate small amounts of the “Limit/Caution Foods” listed in the table on the next page. If you can tolerate these foods, remember to chew them well.

Category	Choose more often	Limit/Caution Foods
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All fluid milk (animal, soy, and rice)</li> <li>• Plain or flavoured yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, cream soups, and puddings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk products with nuts and seeds</li> </ul>
<b>Grain Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole wheat, white or rye bread, muffins, crackers, pancakes, waffles, pasta, and cereals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muffins, cereals, or breads containing intact grains, granola, nuts, seeds, coconut, or dried fruit</li> <li>• Wild rice</li> </ul>
<b>Fruit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any canned, fresh, or cooked fruit with seeds and skins removed: applesauce, banana, melon, apples, pears, peaches, and plums</li> <li>• Citrus fruit with membranes removed</li> <li>• All fruit juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membranes of oranges, mandarins, grapefruit</li> <li>• Persimmon</li> <li>• Peels of fruit with tough skins (examples: apples and grapes)</li> <li>• Dried fruit (examples: raisins, dates, fig.)</li> <li>• Stringy fruit (examples: pineapple, rhubarb)</li> <li>• Fruit with small seeds (examples: kiwi fruit, figs, berries, pomegranate)</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-cooked and canned vegetables with skin and seeds removed—including beets, tomatoes, zucchini, carrots, turnip, squash, rutabaga, parsnip, cauliflower, wax and green beans, pumpkin, sweet potato, yam, broccoli crowns, leek, fennel, chives, garlic, plantain, artichoke hearts, cassava, and kohlrabi</li> <li>• All vegetable juices</li> <li>• Many of the vegetables from the limit/caution group can be acceptable if well cooked and pureed, with skins and seeds removed (example: to use in soups or sauces)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw vegetables</li> <li>• Leafy vegetables (examples: lettuce, spinach, cabbage)</li> <li>• Vegetables with small seeds (example: cucumber)</li> <li>• Stringy vegetables (examples: celery, broccoli stems, spaghetti squash, bean sprouts, bamboo shoots, asparagus)</li> <li>• Vegetables with tough skins/outer coatings (examples: peas, pea pods, onion, corn, green/red peppers, eggplant)</li> <li>• Mushrooms</li> </ul>
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-cooked, tender meat, fish, and poultry</li> <li>• Eggs and soy products</li> <li>• Creamy nut butters</li> <li>• Hummus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuts and seeds</li> <li>• Dried peas, beans, and lentils</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As tolerated: spices, herbs, vinegar, ketchup, mustard, carbonated beverages, jellies, seedless jams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popcorn</li> <li>• Coconut</li> <li>• Jams with seeds</li> </ul>