

Gastroparesis Diet for Delayed Gastric Emptying

Gastroparesis is the medical term for delayed gastric emptying. During the digestion process, the stomach must contract to empty liquid and food products. A well-functioning stomach contracts 3 times per minute, emptying within 90-120 minutes after eating. Slower contractions create delayed gastric emptying and, as a result, food is not digested properly.

The cause of gastroparesis can be from a variety of other conditions such as diabetes, disorders of the nervous system or certain drugs. Many times, no cause is found. Medications can be prescribed to stimulate the stomach to contract, increasing stomach emptying. Diet therapy is also important, consisting of a low fat, low fiber diet. It is recommended to begin with a step diet as below. This diet can help reduce symptoms.

Step 1: Consists of liquids, which usually leave the stomach quickly. Liquids prevent dehydration and keeps the body supplied with salts and electrolytes. This should be followed for no more than 3 days. This meal plan is inadequate in all nutrients except sodium and potassium. When patients have diabetes, sugar containing beverages are allowed as this is the only form of carbohydrate being consumed.

Step 2: Provides additional calories by adding small amount of fat, less than 40 grams per day. This diet should be followed for 4-5 days.

Step 3: Designed for long-term maintenance. Total daily fat is limited to less than 50 g per day. Fibrous foods are restricted as well, limiting total fiber to 10-15 grams per day.

Environment plays an important role in controlling gastroparesis symptoms. By following some simple tips, gas, bloating, and other symptoms can be reduced. Foods should be chewed thoroughly and eaten slowly. Small portions and frequent meals are also recommended.

Our dietitian can also help create more in-depth food choices and variety. Ask to make an appointment.

Step 1 Diet- Gatorade and Bouillon

While this step does not allow for much variety, it does help patients with severe nausea and vomiting. Try sipping on small volumes of bouillon and Gatorade throughout the day. Try getting in several small servings per day, such as 12 servings, each consisting of 4 ounces. Citrus drinks and sugary beverages (such as soda and juices) should be avoided. This meal plan should be followed for 1-3 days.

Step 2 Diet

After 1-3 days on the Step 1 diet, the diet can be advanced to include more nutrition. It is recommended to eat small, frequent meals, 5-6 per day. When advancing the diet, incorporating more variety should be done slowly. Try adding in some of the following foods:

- Fat-free broths with pasta or rice
- Simple, refined crackers such as saltines
- White rice
- White bread
- White pasta
- Eggs

- Vegetable juice
- Well-cooked vegetables without skins
 - Beets
 - Carrots
 - Mushrooms
 - Potatoes (white or sweet)
 - Summer squash
- Fruits without skins
 - Applesauce
 - Apple, peeled
 - Peaches, canned or fresh without peels
 - Pears, canned or fresh without peels
 - Melon
- Dairy
 - Low-fat cheeses: skim mozzarella, reduced-fat cheeses
 - Low-fat yogurt
 - Skim milk
 - Low-fat puddings

This meal plan can be followed for 3-4 days.

Step 3 Diet

The main difference between Step 2 and 3 diets are the addition of other protein sources. Multiple small meals throughout the day (5-6 meals/day) should be continued.

- Follow Step 2 meal plan and add in proteins below.
- Proteins/Meats
 - Eggs
 - Peanut butter (in limited quantities- no more than 2 T/day)
 - Fish- baked
 - Poultry (Chicken, turkey) - skinless, white meat- baked
 - Lean ground beef- 90/10 or 93/7
- Dairy
 - Low-fat (1%) cottage cheese

In general, high fiber and high fat foods should be avoided indefinitely. These food sources do not empty from the stomach, causing further discomfort.

Avoid high fat foods including:

- Gravies, cream soups/sauces
- Alfredo Sauces
- Butter
- Bologna, salami, brats, sausage
- Fried foods
- Pastries
- Ice cream

Avoid high fiber foods including:

- Wheat bread
- Brown rice
- Beans
- Nuts
- Old-fashioned oatmeal