

Dietary hints and tips for patients with a post-operative high output stoma (page 1 of 3)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

Name: Sandra Bryan
Role: Stoma Care Sister
Date written: January 2016
Review date: September 2021
Version: 1.0
Code: PI1369

What is a high output stoma?

Sometimes after your operation your stoma may produce a larger than normal amount of fluid. This is called having a “high output” stoma. This is an output of more than one litre in 24 hours. This can be due to:

- a temporary condition in the first few days/weeks while the body adjusts the amount of fluid it needs to absorb from the bowel, due to changes made by your operation.
- sometimes the bowel doesn't work properly, caused by a temporary paralysis of the intestinal muscles after surgery. This is called 'paralytic ileus'.

It is hard to know how long your high output will last. You may become dehydrated and have an electrolyte imbalance, which may mean your stay in hospital will be longer. Electrolytes are chemicals in your blood that allow your body to function properly. Electrolyte imbalance can make you have a dry mouth, thirst, light-headedness and feeling or being sick. You will have a blood test daily to check the levels of your electrolytes.

How is it treated?

The high output will usually settle with time as the body adjusts to surgery or the temporary paralysis ends. To help you stay well until this happens, you may be told not to eat and drink, or to limit the amount that you drink. You may be given the fluid your body needs through a 'drip' going into one of your veins, usually in your arm. This is called an intravenous infusion and it will make sure you have the fluid and electrolytes that your body needs. If you are allowed to drink, do not drink more than about one litre a day, as drinking more draws more fluid out from the body to be lost through the stoma.

Sometimes if you are feeling or being sick, a tube may need to be passed down your nose into your tummy (stomach) so that fluid which isn't passing out of the stomach as it normally does can be drained and suctioned away at intervals to make you more comfortable and stop you feeling or being sick.

What should I drink?

Once your bowel starts to recover, you should slowly start to drink again. The amount may be limited to begin with; if you need any more fluid this will continue via the drip.

Sometimes you may be given a special drink called St Marks Solution to drink in place of water, squash, milk, tea or coffee. This solution is a combination of salt, sugar and sodium bicarbonate mixed with water, which your body needs to stay healthy. It has little taste and can be mixed with squash and kept cool in the fridge.

You are likely to be prescribed anti-diarrhoeal medication called Loperamide (immodium). This helps the body to absorb more fluid from the bowel. The dosage will depend on the stoma output.

Recipe for St Marks electrolyte mix

- 6 heaped 5ml teaspoons of glucose
- 1 level 5ml teaspoon of salt
- 2.5ml (half heaped teaspoon) of sodium bicarbonate.

Stir all ingredients into a litre of water and chill. Add squash according to your preference and taste.

With time, St Marks solution, medication and diet, the high output will resolve and the usual diet recommended by your Stoma Care Nurse can start. It may be necessary for the Loperamide to continue, this is quite usual, ideally to be taken 30 minutes before food.

What food should I eat?

As you are allowed to eat again, these foods are suggested:

- plain food is best. Avoid spicy, fried and fibrous foods
- have some white bread, low fibre cereals (rice krispies/cornflakes), potatoes, white pasta or rice with each meal. This will help to thicken your stool
- sprinkle salt on your meals. Choose salty foods from the hospital menu; cheese, tuna, meat and fish paste/pate. Oxo and Bovril to drink, gravy and sauces. Crisps, Pringles can be brought in from home
- foods with gelatine, i.e. jelly, yogurts, 3-4 jelly babies or marshmallows a day (from home)

You should also:

- eat regularly
- eat slowly and chew well
- do not eat and drink at the same time

- avoid smoking
- avoid alcohol and fizzy drinks.

Foods that should be avoided :

- dried fruits
- nuts
- high fibre cereals (fruit and fibre, all-bran)
- too many fruit and vegetables (although stewed apples and under ripe bananas are okay).
- spicy foods
- fruit juices.

Further support

IA, the Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group (formerly known as the Ileostomy Association of Great Britain and Ireland), is a mutual support group which has the primary aim of helping people who have had their colon removed

www.iasupport.org/about#sthash.eOihKPVi.dpuf

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Contact details

Sister Sandra Bryan, Sister Suzie Dukes and Sister Michelle Boucher

Stoma Care Department

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

01722 429256 (direct dial)