

MY FOOD DIARY

DIET, NUTRITION, & INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE (IBD)





Food, the gut, & your inflammatory bowel disease

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a group of inflammatory conditions affecting the digestive system. The two main forms of IBD are Crohn's disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC).¹

IBD can make it difficult to get proper nutrition from your food, and some foods may make your symptoms worse.^{1,2}

To keep well, you may need to make some changes to your diet to help manage some symptoms of IBD. This includes avoiding certain foods that cause irritation and make your symptoms worse, and by eating more of certain foods to ensure you get the right nutrition. These changes are in addition to the treatment your care team offers.

While no specific foods can cure or cause IBD, you should aim to eat a healthy, balanced diet and take note of foods that worsen your symptoms.³

Why should I keep a food diary?

Some foods may make your IBD worse. However, everyone is different, so what causes you irritation may not for someone else.

By tracking your food and drink intake, you can identify things that cause an issue for you and consider avoiding them. You can also use the diary to discuss your condition with your doctor

Eating a balanced diet^{4,5}

Adults need to eat **2000–2500 calories per day**, though this depends on age and activity, and how quickly your body uses energy. If you absorb fewer calories than you need, you will lose weight; if you take in more than you need, you will gain weight.⁴

You should drink **6–8 drinks a day**, such as water, milk, tea, coffee or sugar-free drinks. Fruit juices, smoothies, and sugary carbonated drinks can contain a lot of sugar (and calories) and should be drunk infrequently.⁵ What you eat may depend on how well you are feeling, and your diet might vary. When you are not experiencing symptoms, you should aim to eat a balanced diet to ensure you get all the nutrients you need.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE

A source of vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibre. At least 5 servings a day, which can be fresh, frozen, or canned

DAIRY & ALTERNATIVES

The best source of calcium and vitamin D, this includes eggs, milk, cheese and yoghurt, and alternatives like soya milk. Try to avoid higher fat or high sugar options.

PROTEIN

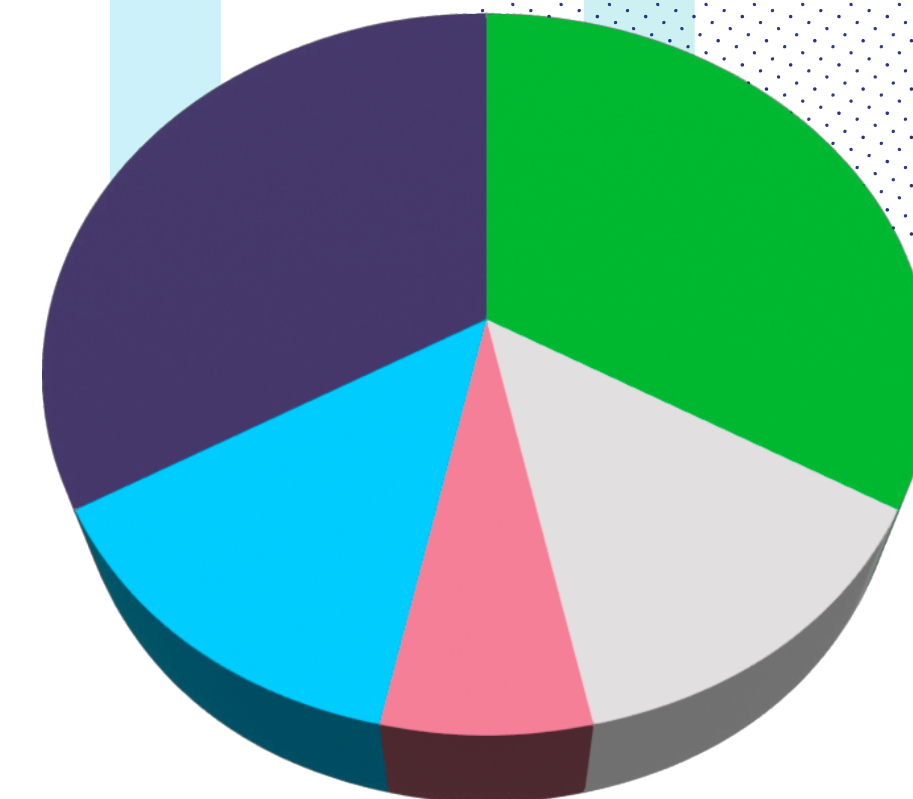
Essential to repair the cells of the body, protein can come from animal products (meats, fish, eggs) or legumes (beans, peas, seeds). Aim to eat more beans and pulses and less red or processed meat

STARCHY CARBOHYDRATES

Most of our energy comes from cereals, grains, pasta, and potatoes, which should make up about a third of your diet. Choose 'whole grain' foods with less added sugar and fat

OILS, FATS, AND SUGARS

High in energy and needed in small amounts. Unsaturated fats such as vegetable oils are healthier than saturated (animal) fats



Symptoms & your diet²

No single diet is recommended for people with IBD, but the food you eat can affect your symptoms on an individual level.² Finding out what is right for you and making some small changes to what you eat may give you some relief.

In addition, eating a healthy diet will help to keep you feeling well and ensure you are getting the energy and nutrients you need.

Here are some practical implications of the ways certain foods interact with common symptoms in IBD.

LOOSE STOOLS AND DIARRHOEA

Some people find that spicy, fatty, or high fibre foods, or foods with gluten and dairy worsen their diarrhoea, as can alcohol and artificial sweeteners.

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration can be caused either due to not drinking enough or losing fluids through diarrhoea and vomiting. Can be worsened by drinking alcohol.

BLOATING & WIND

Not just what you eat, but when and how you eat can affect bloating and wind. It can help to make sure you chew thoroughly, eat slowly and calmly, and eat smaller, more frequent meals.

CONSTIPATION

Constipation can be caused by a lack of fibre, dehydration, or damage to the rectum. It can be caused by some types of painkillers and by iron supplements. Make sure you drink enough and speak to your IBD team about increasing your fibre intake or using laxatives.

NAUSEA & VOMITING

Crohn's disease sometimes makes people sick, and some medicines for Crohn's and ulcerative colitis can cause nausea.

Try to eat plain or dry foods like toast, avoid strong smelling foods and sip drinks slowly.

WEIGHT CHANGES

You might eat less when you have a flare-up, and you might not get enough nutrients. Tell your IBD team if you have lost weight unintentionally and try high calorie snacks and drinks or supplements. Conversely, steroids can increase appetite and you may gain weight – again, you should speak to your healthcare professionals before trying to lose weight to make sure you are getting the nutrition you need.

FATIGUE

The fatigue that people with IBD experience can be caused by anaemia, anxiety and depression and certain medications, as well as being worse when your gut is inflamed. If you get insufficient nutrition, this may worsen your fatigue, and your IBD team may suggest iron-rich foods. Eating smaller meals more frequently can help to maintain your energy.

NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCIES

Iron – low iron levels can lead to anaemia, where fewer blood cells are made. Green leafy vegetables, fortified cereals, meat, and pulses are good sources of iron.

Vitamin B12 – Found in meat, dairy and fortified cereals, so people who eat a vegan diet may need to take a supplement. Extensive inflammation or removal of the last part of the bowel (ileum) may prevent you absorbing B12.

Vitamin D – Found in oily fish, eggs, and spreads with added vitamin D. People with IBD are at risk of low vitamin D and this can cause bone problems.

Calcium – Found in dairy foods, fish and fortified breakfast cereals, calcium is vital for bone health. You may be given calcium supplements if you cannot eat dairy foods or if you are taking steroids, which can affect bone health.

Keeping your food diary

Keeping a record of what you eat day to day can be a really useful way of determining how your diet might be contributing to your symptoms. This can then help facilitate discussions with your IBD care team. If you want to make changes to your diet or to make sure you are getting enough nutrients, you should get support from a specialist IBD dietitian, and a food diary is a good place to begin.

The table below shows an example of how you can fill in your food diary. It is a good idea to try to record all the food you eat every day, and also to record any drinks you have.

<i>Monday</i>	FOOD & DRINK	SYMPTOMS	TIME & DURATION
BREAKFAST	<i>Toast & cereal, tea</i>	<i>Bloating, diarrhoea</i>	<i>9.30am, 2 hours</i>
MID-MORNING SNACK			

RECORD WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK, WHAT SYMPTOMS YOU HAVE AND FOR HOW LONG.

It might be tempting to try to follow one of the many strict diet regimens, exclusion diets or dietary enrichments, but it is important that you speak to your doctor about whether this is right for you. Making lots of changes very rapidly can make it hard to tell what foods work for you.



DAY AND DATE

FOOD & DRINK

SYMPTOMS

TIME AND DURATION

BREAKFAST

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LUNCH

MID-AFTERNOON SNACK

DINNER

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You have now come to the end of your food diary.

Remember to save your diary so you can share it with your doctor. To continue tracking your food and drink intake, download a new diary from the Living With IBD [Nutrition](#) section.

Get further support, advice and information on your inflammatory bowel disease from [Crohn's & Colitis UK](#) and [IBD Relief](#), and find guidance on diet and digestive health from [NHS Eat well](#).

1. CCUK. Food. <https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/info-support/information-about-crohns-and-colitis/all-information-about-crohns-and-colitisliving-with-crohns-or-colitis/food>. Accessed: April 2023. **2.** Lucendo AJ, De Rezende LC. Importance of nutrition in inflammatory bowel disease. *World J Gastroenterol* 2009;15(17):2081–088. **3.** NHS. Inflammatory bowel disease. www.nhs.uk/conditions/inflammatory-bowel-disease/. Accessed: April 2023. **4.** NHS. What should my daily intake of calories be? <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/food-and-diet/what-should-my-daily-intake-of-calories-be/>. Accessed: April 2023. **5.** Public Health England. Eatwell guide. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>. Accessed: April 2023.