

What is Gastroparesis?

Gastroparesis is a condition in which the stomach empties very slowly after eating a meal. This is a complication of diabetes due to nerve damage in the digestive system. High blood sugar can prevent the delivery of nutrients and oxygen to the nerves. Over time, the nerves of the stomach may not work as well as they used to.

Symptoms:

- Bloating
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Feeling full early
- Problems with high and low blood sugar levels



Nutrition Therapy

Making simple changes to your diet can help manage symptoms of gastroparesis. Keep in mind that what works for someone else may not work at all for you. Use these basic guidelines and a little trial & error to find out what the best strategy is for you.

- Eat small, frequent meals (4 to 6 per day) to maintain usual food intake
 - Eating smaller meals can help the stomach empty faster
- Chew foods well before swallowing
 - Solid foods do not empty as well
 - Try solid foods in the morning, switch to semi-liquid or liquid meals through the day
- Avoid foods high in fat
 - High fat foods can slow the emptying of the stomach
 - Fat in liquids is often better tolerated and can provide needed calories (e.g., 2% milk/yogurt, smooth nut butters, smoothies/milkshakes)
- Avoid foods high in fibre
 - High fibre foods can slow the emptying of the stomach
 - Try peeling fruits and vegetables and eating them cooked or pureed
- Drink fluids during meals and snacks which empty more easily than solids do
 - Dehydration can often make symptoms worse
- Sit upright while eating and for at least an hour after. Consider taking a walk after meals to help the stomach empty

Quick Tips

- Avoid alcohol and tobacco
- Find ways to reduce or manage stress, which can affect digestion and blood sugars
- Avoid chewing gum and drinking carbonated beverages (can increase air swallowing)
- Avoid peppermint, chocolate, spicy food, and caffeine (can cause heartburn)
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- On days when symptoms are worse, try taking just liquids to let the stomach rest

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Sample Menu (1 carbohydrate choice = 15g)

meal	food choices	maximize your nutrition!
breakfast (3-4 carbohydrate choices)	1-2 slices of bread (low fibre) 1 scrambled egg 1 cup skim milk 1 pear, no skin	✓ Eat nutritious foods first ✓ Blend any food with water, vegetable juice or broth to make a puree
snack (1 carbohydrate choice)	1 cup of melon or 15 grapes	
lunch (3 ½ carbohydrate choices)	2-3 ounces baked chicken or fish ½ cup mashed potatoes 1 tsp margarine 1 cup cooked carrots and cauliflower 1 cup skim milk ½ cup canned fruit in water	✓ Try adding skim milk powder or protein powder to foods such as smoothies, pureed foods and yogurt (or choose plain Greek yogurt – high in protein) ✓ Keep a journal of foods that are not well tolerated to avoid them in the future ✓ Consider taking a basic multivitamin to help meet all of your nutrition needs – speak to your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian before considering any specific vitamin or mineral
snack (1 carbohydrate choice)	¾ cup 2% plain Greek yogurt flavoured with 1 tsp cinnamon	
dinner (3 ½ carbohydrate choices)	1 cup vegetable or cream soup 7 soda crackers ⅓ cup hummus ½ cup skim milk ½ cup applesauce	
snack (1 carbohydrate choice)	1 banana with 1 tbsp peanut butter	



Glycemic Control

Controlling your blood sugar can help improve the symptoms associated with gastroparesis. Ask your diabetes educator about meal timing, types and portions of carbohydrate.

- You may need to:
 - Take insulin more often or change the type of insulin / medication you take
 - Take your insulin after you eat instead of before
 - Check your blood glucose levels more often after you eat