

# When You Have a High Output Ostomy

## What is an ostomy?

An ostomy is a hole made by your surgeon on your abdomen. It connects your bowel to the outside of your body. The opening allows your poop or stool to leave your body. We refer to this as your output.

There are different types of ostomies. Where the ostomy is on your abdomen depends on the part of the bowel it connects.

You have a:

- Jejunostomy** (say *jew-joo-nos-toe-me*)  
located in the middle part of the small bowel (the jejunum)
- Ileostomy** (say *il-ee-os-toe-me*)  
located in the lower part of the small bowel (the ileum)
- Colostomy** (say *ko-los-toe-me*)  
located in the large bowel (the colon)

## What is high output?

You have a high output ostomy when either of these things happen:

- You have more than 1500 mL (6 cups) of output in a 24-hour period for 2 or more days in a row.
- You need to empty your ostomy bag more than 8 to 10 times a day for 2 or more days in a row. Usually, it also means the output is watery (diarrhea) and the ostomy leaks often.

## Why is high output a problem?

High output can:

- increase the amount of fluids and electrolytes you are losing
- increase the chances of you getting dehydrated
- lead to malnutrition

## How do I know I am dehydrated?

You will notice such things as:

- feeling thirsty
- dry skin, mouth, tongue
- dark-coloured pee (urine)
- not going pee (urinating) very often and when you do go, not peeing very much
- losing weight quickly
- stomach cramps
- feeling dizzy or light-headed
- headache
- the skin on your arm or belly does not spring back into place within seconds after pinching

## How do I know I might be malnourished?

You will notice such things as:

- eating less than usual
- losing weight without trying
- sleepiness or tiredness
- dizziness
- wound not healing well
- bruising more easily

### What can I do?

While there are many reasons for having a higher output, we know certain foods or fluids are often the reason for a change ostomy output. It can also be related to how often or how much you eat.

#### Tips for eating

Generally, choose foods that are easy to digest (see the table on the next page). This helps to thicken your output.

- Chew your food completely.
- Choose foods that can thicken your output such as peanut butter, rice, bananas, cheese, applesauce, and yogurt.
- Eat regular meals throughout the day. If you eat smaller meals more often, it can help to digest better than eating a few larger meals.
- Add salt to meals and snacks. High output increases the amount of salt you are losing. Also, you need salt in your diet to help your body absorb fluids.
- Try not to eat foods high in sugar such as candy, cakes, and cookies. Sugar draws water into your bowel and can make the diarrhea worse.
- Stay away from artificial sweeteners such as sorbitol, mannitol, and xylitol. These are found in gum, candies, and low calorie desserts.
- If spicy foods bother you, don't eat them.
- If you cannot digest lactose (lactose intolerant), stay away from foods and drinks with lactose.
- If prescribed by your doctor, take medicine for treating diarrhea (anti-diarrheal) 30 minutes before meals.

#### Tips for drinking fluids

Drink enough fluids to keep you hydrated, especially when you are having a high output. Keep in mind, the gut does not absorb some fluids well, which can cause a higher output. Your output can also increase if you drink too much fluid.

- Drink enough fluids so that you are peeing more than 4 cups (1000mL) a day.
- Drink enough fluids during the day to keep your pee (urine) clear to light yellow.
- Sip rather than gulping fluids or drinking a large amount at one time.
- Sip fluids all through the day.
- Have only a few sips at meals.
- Pace yourself. For example, sip at 1 cup of water over 30 minutes.
- Choose unsweetened or sugar-free drinks such as water, milk, broth, diluted 100% fruit juices (mixed with equal parts water), caffeine-free tea or coffee, and unsweetened coconut water.
- It is best not to drink:
  - prune juice
  - drinks with caffeine
  - alcohol
  - drinks high in sugar such as juice, pop, commercial sport drinks (Gatorade, Powerade), and lactose-free milk

## Easy to Digest Foods

### Starchy Foods

Cereals: oatmeal*, cream of wheat, Cheerios®, Rice Krispies®, Flakes, Puffs, oats* ...	Baked goods: smooth textured soft breads, buns, pancakes, muffins, chapatti, tortillas, roti, etc.
Grains: rice (any type), pasta, barley*, couscous, soft quinoa	

### Protein Foods

Meats: chicken, turkey, beef, pork...	Tofu
Seafood: crab, halibut, mackerel, oysters, clams, salmon, sardines, scallops, shrimp, trout, tuna, etc.	Smooth nut butters*
Dairy: cheese, yogurt	Mushy lentils: hummus*, dahl*, lentil soup*, split pea soup*
Eggs	Tempeh – cut into small pieces

### Vegetables

Vegetable juices	Cook and cut into very small pieces: broccoli, bok choy, cauliflower, sweet peppers, onions, garlic
Canned crushed tomato	
Tomato paste	
Relish: sweet and dill (but not corn)	Remove thick skins: potato*, yam*, squash*, pumpkin*, eggplant*
Avocado* ripe and sliced	
Cut into thin sticks and cooked until soft: carrots*, parsnip*, turnip*	Puree until smooth: vegetable soups, mushrooms, spinach

### Fruits

Applesauce*	Peeled thick-skinned fruits: apples*, pears*, peaches*, plums*
Ripe banana*	
Soft ripe seedless melon*	Citrus* – remove membranes
Canned apricots*, peaches*, pears*, mandarins*	Mango* pureed
Raspberries (handful only)	Dates diced, moistened and cooked
Strawberries* ripe and sliced	

Foods with a \* are a good source of soluble fibre that can help to thicken output.

**I am still having trouble staying hydrated.**

**What can I do?**

You might want to try Oral Rehydration Solutions if you have been choosing the foods and fluids described here and you are still have a high output or are dehydrated.

Oral Rehydration Solutions are a good way to help replace lost fluids. They give you the right mix of salt, sugar, and other minerals in water. Also, they do not pull fluid into the bowel.

Sports drinks (like Gatorade and Powerade) will not work. These have too much sugar and not enough salt.

- Buy Oral Rehydration Solutions at a pharmacy (most carry this product).  
Examples of products:  
Hydralyte, Gastrolyte, Pedialyte
- Choose a flavour you enjoy.
- Refrigerate.  
They usually taste better when cold.
- Aim to replace most of your fluids with an Oral Rehydration Solution.  
It might be easier to start with 1 Litre a day and increase to 2 to 3 Litres.
- Sip the solution all through the day.
- Try making popsicles with the solution.

**Can I make my own Rehydration Solution?**

Yes, you can.

- Choose one of these 3 recipes.
- Mix the ingredients in a container.
- Stir until dissolved.
- Refrigerate.

**Water and juice solution**

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- 1 cup (250 mL) orange juice
- 4 cups (1000 mL) water
- 8 tsp sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp baking soda

**Salt water and sugar solution**

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- 4 cups (1000 mL) 1L water
- ¾ tsp salt
- 6 tsp sugar
- Optional: add Crystal Light to taste

**Diluted sports drink solution**

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- 1 ½ cups (375 mL) regular strength sports drink (Gatorade or Powerade)
- 2 ½ cups (625 mL) water
- ¾ tsp salt

If you would like more options, ask a dietitian for other recipes.

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Any time you have questions or concerns, speak to:

- Your doctor
- Your dietitian
- Fraser Health Virtual Care, 1-800-314-0999, daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- A registered dietitian at HealthLinkBC 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for hearing impaired), 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday  
Available in over 130 languages.