

Ileostomy: Dealing with a Food Blockage

Adapted from www.mountrnity.org/wellness-library/healthsheets

After an ileostomy, it may be harder to digest foods that are high in fiber, such as raw vegetables, popcorn, and nuts. Eaten in large amounts, these foods can clump together. Then they get stuck in the small intestine, causing a **blockage**. You need to know the signs of a blockage and what to do if you have one.

Signs of a Blockage

A blockage can be an emergency. That's because you can become dehydrated quickly. The intestine can also rupture. Most likely you'll never have a blockage. But you need to know the signs just in case you do.

- At first, you may have an almost constant spurting of very watery stool. Your intestine is taking water from your body to try to get rid of the blockage.

- You may feel bloated or have cramping. The stool may have a strong odor. The stoma and/or the skin around the stoma may swell.

- If the blockage remains, the flow of stool will stop totally. Then you'll have increased pain, often leading to nausea and vomiting.

What to Do

You can try one or more of the following:

- Put on a pouch with a slightly larger opening.
- Gently massage your abdomen with the palms of your hands.
- Lie on your back. Pull your knees to your chest and rock from side to side.
- Take a hot bath for 15–20 minutes, or place a warm hot pack around the stoma area. Be careful that it is not too hot as it could burn your stoma and surrounding skin.
- Do not** eat any solid food, but continue to drink fluids in small amounts.
- Do not** take any laxatives or stool softeners. They cause your body to lose more water.

When to Call Your Doctor:

Call your doctor or Stomal nurse, or go to the nearest hospital emergency room if:

- A blockage lasts more than 2–3 hours.
- You start to vomit.

Ways to Help Prevent a Blockage

Sometimes a blockage occurs no matter what you do. But you can help prevent a blockage.

- Drink at least 8–12 cups (2 Litres) of fluids, such as water or juice, each day.
- Chew your food slowly and thoroughly.
- Eat only small amounts of foods that are high in fiber or cellulose. These include raw vegetables, unpeeled fresh fruits, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, cabbage, celery, coconut, corn, mushrooms, pea pods, dried fruits, nuts, seeds, popcorn, and hot dogs and other meats in casings.
- Go easy on bran and other high-fiber grains, such as granola.



"THEY MUST HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD AT THE SURGERY. ITS MY HUSBAND WHO HAS THE BLOCKAGE!"