

Gastroparesis: Guidelines, Tips, and Sample Meal Plan

Gastroparesis, or delayed stomach emptying, is a disabling motility disease. It happens when nerves to the stomach are damaged or stop working. When the main nerve (vagus) is not working properly, the movement of food is slowed or stopped. This disorder may cause:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Heartburn
- Bloating and belching
- Feeling full quickly
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Feeling tired
- Blood glucose (sugar) fluctuations

Gastroparesis interferes with your ability to grind, mix, and digest your food properly. These guidelines may help reduce the side effects:

- Consume small, frequent meals, four to six times/day
- Limit fiber foods to 10 grams (g)/day, avoiding:
 - Foods such as cabbage and broccoli, which tend to stay in the stomach
 - High-fiber foods, when you have severe symptoms
- Eat low-fat foods, and avoid foods high in fat—fats, including vegetable oils, naturally cause a delay in stomach emptying
- Choose nutritional supplements with <10 g of fat/can for extra calories and protein (examples: Ensure[®], Glucerna[®], Carnation[®] Instant Breakfast[®], and Slim-Fast[®])
- Chew food thoroughly; sometimes ground or pureed meats are tolerated better
- Do not lie down for at least 1 hour after meals
- Consume most liquids between meals
- Try to keep a daily routine—stress can bring on or worsen symptoms
- Pay attention to symptoms—sometimes taking a slow-paced walk can help
- Keep a food record of foods that cause distress, and try to avoid those foods
- Review all medications and over-the-counter products with your doctor—some medications can slow down digestion

- Focus on meals that have little odor, if food odors trigger nausea; try foods such as:
 - Cold foods and cold sandwiches
 - Foods that are grilled outdoors

- Avoid the following, which can irritate the lining of the stomach and result in acid reflux:
 - Smoking
 - Alcohol
 - Caffeine
 - Spicy foods
 - Mint

- Keep your blood sugar under control, if you have diabetes, and let your doctor know if your blood sugar consistently runs higher than 200

Treatment of gastroparesis

Treating gastroparesis depends on the frequency and severity of symptoms. Four stages of treatment are outlined in this section, but work with your doctor and/or dietitian for specific recommendations.

Stage 1: Liquids

Liquids usually leave the stomach rapidly by gravity alone. Consume any tolerated liquids slowly throughout the day with plain saltine crackers.

Stage 2: Blenderized foods

You can puree Stage 3 and Stage 4 foods in your blender. You may need to add some liquid when blending solid foods.

Stage 3: Soft, low-fat and low-fiber foods

This stage starts to include a small amount of fat—<40 g/day.

Stage 4: Solid, low-fat and low-fiber foods

This is intended for long-term maintenance. Fat is limited to 50 g/day, and fibrous foods are avoided, because you can not digest many plant fibers.

Foods for Stage 3

Food group	Recommended	Limit
Breads or starches	Cream of Wheat [®] , pasta, white rice, egg noodles, and low-fat crackers	Oatmeal and whole-grain rice, cereals, and breads
Fruits	Canned fruits without skins, apple juice, cranberry juice, grape juice, and prune juice	All fresh and dried fruits, canned fruits with skins, and citrus juices
Vegetables	Vegetable juice and well-cooked vegetables without skins	All raw vegetables, cooked vegetables with skins, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, corn, onion, peas, and sauerkraut
Milk products	Yogurt, low-fat cheese, skim milk, and products made with skim milk	Whole milk, creams, and half-and-half
Soups	Fat-free bouillon, soups made from skim milk, and broths with pasta, noodles, and allowed vegetables	Soups made with heavy cream or whole milk and broths containing fat
Desserts and sweets	Hard candies, caramels, pudding and custards made from skim milk, frozen yogurt, fruit ice, gelatin, ice milk, jelly, honey, and syrups	High-fat desserts (cakes, pies, cookies, pastries, and ice cream) and fruit preserves
Fats and oils	Any type of fat in small amounts	None
Meats, eggs, and legumes	Eggs, peanut butter (2 tablespoons [Tbsp]/day)	Beef, poultry, pork, dried peas, beans, and lentils

Foods for Stage 4

Food group	Recommended	Limit
Breads or starches	All not listed in "limit" column	High-fiber, whole-grain breads and cereals
Fruits	All fruits and juices not listed in "limit" column	Fruits with skins, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, coconut, and figs
Vegetables	Vegetable juices, well-	Raw vegetables with

	cooked vegetables, and raw vegetables not listed in "limit" column, chewed well	skins, cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts, celery, and pea pods
Milk products	Yogurt, low-fat cheese, skim milk, and products made with skim milk	Whole milk, creams, and half-and-half
Soups	Any tolerated	None
Desserts and sweets	Hard candies, caramels, pudding and custards made from skim milk, frozen yogurt, fruit ice, gelatin, ice milk, jelly, honey, and syrups	High-fat desserts (cakes, cookies, ice cream, pastries, and pies) and fruit preserves
Fats and oils	Any tolerated, in small amounts	None
Meats, eggs, and legumes	Eggs, peanut butter, poultry, fish, and lean ground beef	Fibrous meats (steaks, roasts, and chops), dried beans, peas, and lentils

Sample meal plan for Stage 4

Breakfast

1 cup (C) Cream of Wheat
 One slice white toast
 1 Tbsp Peanut Butter

Morning snack

6 ounces (oz) low-fat yogurt
 One half of a banana

Lunch

8 fluid ounce (fl oz) nutritional drink*
 ½ C pasta
 1 Tbsp fat-free Parmesan cheese
 1 Tbsp low-fat butter

Afternoon snack

½ C canned peaches
 ¼ C low-fat cottage cheese

Dinner

2 oz chicken or fish
 ½ C cooked squash
 ½-1 C mashed potatoes

Evening snack

1 C low-fat pudding or frozen yogurt

Total calories: 1630

Total fiber: 10 g

Total fat: 49 g

Total protein: 71 g

Beverages between meals

Choose from the following:

- Vegetable juice
- Crystal Light[®]
- Water mixed with fruit juice
- Nutritional drink supplements, if needed (examples: Ensure, Glucerna, Carnation Instant Breakfast, Slim-Fast)

References

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Review Date 10/08

G-0818