



Dietary and Lifestyle Recommendations for Patients with Gastroparesis

Gastroparesis, or paralysis of the stomach, refers to a stomach that empties slowly. Gastroparesis is characterized by symptoms by bloating, nausea, vomiting, and feeling full after eating only a small amount of food. Gastroparesis can occur as a result of several conditions, especially in people with diabetes. However, the cause of gastroparesis is not known in many patients. It is more common in women than men.

General principles for treating symptomatic gastroparesis involve several strategies. First, attempts are made to correct fluid and nutritional deficiencies from chronic nausea and vomiting, and inability to eat normally. Second, therapy is given for the symptoms that accompany gastroparesis. Third, the underlying cause of gastroparesis is treated, but the underlying cause may not be found in many patients. The treatment of gastroparesis generally relies on dietary modifications and medications that enhance gastric emptying to reduce nausea and vomiting symptoms.

Things to Do

- Eat small portion meals more frequently. Reducing the meal size reduces the distention of the stomach from the meal. By eating smaller meals, patients may not feel as full or bloated and the stomach may empty faster. With the smaller meals, increase the number of meals to 4-6 per day is needed to maintain adequate nutritional intake.
- Taking fluids throughout the meal and sitting upright or walking for 1-2 hours after meals may help in the emptying of the meal from the stomach.
- A daily multivitamin/mineral supplement can be taken if dietary intake is inadequate.

Things to Avoid

- Avoid foods high in fat. Fat delays emptying of the stomach. Eating less fat-containing foods will decrease the amount of time food stays in the stomach. However, fat-containing liquids, such as milkshakes, may be tolerated and provide needed calories.
- Avoid foods with indigestible fibers (roughage). Indigestible fibers are not digested well by stomach acid. It requires special coordinated stomach contraction to get the roughage out of the stomach. Patients with gastroparesis often do not have these special contractions. Indigestible fibers may bind together and cause a “bezoar” in some patients. Examples of foods with indigestible fibers to avoid include:
 - Certain fruits: oranges, berries, skins of apples
 - Raw vegetables: leafy vegetables, broccoli, corn, salads, sauerkraut, Brussel sprouts. Cooked the vegetables well. In patients with severe gastroparesis, vegetables should be blenderized and strained.
 - Others: Legumes/dried Beans, lentils, soy beans, popcorn, nuts, and seeds

Digestive and Liver Disorders
Neurogastroenterology and Motility Center

IU Health University Hospital
550 N University Boulevard, Room 2180
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Motility Nurse (317) 948-4601
Clinic Scheduling (800) 486-6124
Motility Lab (317) 948-8137
Procedure Scheduling (317) 944-8586

- Avoid eating for about 4 hours before lying down for bed. If foods are retained in the stomach, and it may come up the throat at night when the patients lies down.

If these measures are ineffective, patient may be advised to consume the bulk of their meals as semi-solids or liquids, such as puréed foods or soups. Stomach emptying of liquids is often normal in patients with gastroparesis. Calorie-containing drinks, such as Hawaiian Punch or Hi C, provide fluid and calories, hence are better than water alone. Some options while on a liquid diet include milk, instant breakfast, milkshakes, yogurt, puddings, custard, cereals, and smoothies.

To meet the nutritional needs of patients, it may be necessary to supplement the diet with a commercially available liquid nutrient preparation that is low in fiber such as Ensure, Boost, or even baby foods. Carnation Instant Breakfast powder mixed with skim milk is a potentially good tasting and cheaper alternative to standard prepared supplements. Blenderized foods prepared by the patient may also be used as a liquid nutrient source. Any food can be blenderized; solid foods will need to be thinned with some type of liquid, such as broth, milk, juice, water.

A Sample Diet for Patients with Gastroparesis

Breakfast

- 1 cup cream of wheat cereal
- ½ cup skim milk
- ½ cup grape juice
- 1 scrambled egg

Snack

- 10 ounces of instant breakfast with skim milk

Lunch

- ½ cup vegetable soup
- ½ turkey sandwich
- ½ cup applesauce
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise

Snack

- 10 ounces banana shake made with 1 plain or vanilla yogurt, milk and sugar

Dinner

- 2-3 ounces baked chicken or fish
- ½ cup mashed potatoes
- 1 teaspoon margarine
- ½ cup spinach
- ½ cup milk
- ½ cup fruit cocktail

Snack

- ½ cup pudding, custard or gelatin

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