

ovacome..
ovarian cancer

Diet for a blocked bowel

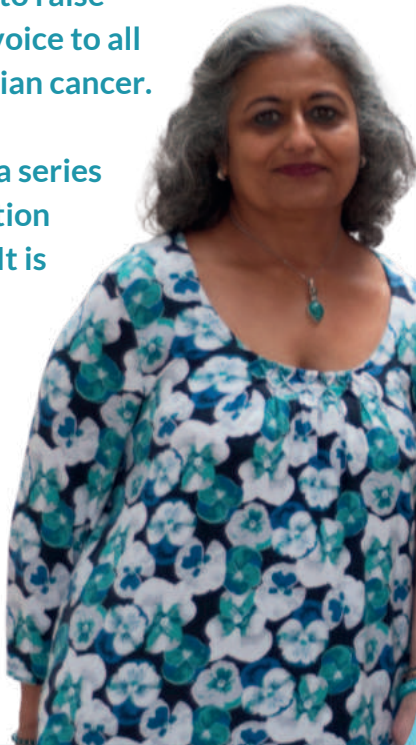


Ovacome is a national charity providing support and information to anyone affected by ovarian cancer.

We give information about symptoms, diagnosis, treatments and research.

We run a free telephone and email support line and work to raise awareness and give a voice to all those affected by ovarian cancer.

This booklet is part of a series giving clinical information about ovarian cancer. It is for those who want information about how to manage a blocked bowel.



Diet for a blocked bowel

A blocked bowel (also known as bowel obstruction) is a possible complication of ovarian cancer. This can happen for several reasons.

As the tumour grows it can press on the bowel, causing a blockage. Sticky tissue called adhesions can form after surgery and can stop food passing down the gut.

If you have experienced or are at risk of a blocked bowel, you may be advised to eat less fibre. This is known as a fibre-restricted diet or a low residue diet.

This sort of diet may not be suitable for you. If you are not sure whether this applies to you, please check with your doctor or specialist cancer dietitian.

Why should I eat less fibre?

Fibre (also called roughage) is the part of food that you do not digest which passes down into the lower part of the gut where harmless bacteria ferment it and produce gas (wind).

Eating less fibre will reduce the amount of waste you produce and, as a result, ease symptoms such as bloating and stomach pains. It may also reduce the risk of your bowel becoming blocked.



Eating less fibre will reduce the amount of waste you produce and, as a result, ease symptoms such as bloating and stomach pains. It may also reduce the risk of your bowel becoming blocked.

Will this type of diet work?

It is difficult to study the possible benefits of a fibre-restricted diet for a blocked bowel. Most of the evidence to suggest this type of diet is helpful comes from the experience of doctors, nurses and dietitians working with people with ovarian cancer.

What is a fibre-restricted diet?

This type of diet includes low-fibre foods and a reduced amount of fruit, vegetables and wholemeal products. The lists at the end of this booklet give examples of foods you should avoid and foods which are allowed.

What about constipation?

A fibre-restricted diet still contains some fibre. If you are worried about being constipated, talk to your doctor as you may need laxatives. For our bowels to work properly, it is important to have enough to drink. We normally need about eight to 10 cups of fluid each day (two litres a day).

What about vitamins and minerals?

When some foods are limited in your diet, it can be difficult to make sure you get the right amount of vitamins and minerals. It may be necessary to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement.

There are lots of supplements available in chemists, health food shops and supermarkets. A dietitian can give you advice about whether you need to take supplements, and they can also recommend which type to buy.

What if the diet is too difficult to follow?

As part of a healthy diet, we are all being encouraged to eat more fibre. Like many people who have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, you may have been eating lots of fruit and vegetables, wholemeal bread and high-fibre breakfast cereals. So, a fibre-restricted diet can be completely different to your normal diet.

If you are finding it difficult to follow a fibre-restricted diet, ask for a referral to a dietitian who can give you further advice on suitable food choices.

What if I'm losing weight?

If your stomach is bloated and uncomfortable, it is often difficult to eat a normal-sized meal. This can eventually lead to you losing weight. It is usually better to have several small meals and snacks during the day. If you have a poor appetite and you lose weight, try to eat foods high in energy such as those containing fat and sugar. Your doctor or dietitian may also recommend nourishing drinks and oral nutritional supplements to help stabilise your weight. These are likely to be available on prescription.

Is a fibre-restricted diet suitable for those with ovarian cancer?

This type of diet is not suitable or necessary for all people with ovarian cancer. It is likely only to be a benefit if you have or are at risk of a blocked bowel.

Foods you are allowed

Protein

Lean meat, chicken, fish, offal (liver, kidneys), eggs, cheese, tofu, Quorn.



Pulses, nuts and seeds

Smooth coconut milk, small portion smooth peanut butter, small portion hummus.



Dairy

Cheese, milk (all types including dairy alternatives), ice-cream, natural and fruit-flavoured yoghurts, custard, cream, butter, margarine.



Starchy foods

White flour, bread rolls, crumpets, scones, croissants, brioche, plain naan, chapatti, poppadums.

White crackers (such as cream crackers), white biscuits (such as Rich Tea).

White pasta (such as macaroni, spaghetti), white rice, pitta bread made with white flour, rice noodles.



Low-fibre breakfast cereal without fruit or nuts (such as Rice Krispies, Sugar Puffs, Coco Pops, Ricicles, Cornflakes).



Fruit

Ripe, peeled and cored apples, pears, peaches, apricots and melon. Fruit juice (no bits).

Pureed, stewed, tinned or cooked fruit (without skins, pips or stones). Smooth fruit sauces and coulis with pips removed.

Foods you are allowed

Vegetables

Peeled and well-cooked potato, carrots, turnips, swede, marrow, beetroot, cauliflower florets, broccoli florets.

Sieved tomato sauces or soup, including passata and tomato puree.

Ripe avocado.

Clear soups without vegetables.



Sweets

Jam, marmalade without peel or pips, lemon curd and honey.

Sweets, chocolate, cakes, and biscuits without fruit or nuts and coconut.

Crisps, pretzels, cheese twists.



Miscellaneous

Condiments e.g. tomato ketchup, sweet chilli sauce, brown sauce, barbeque sauce, mayonnaise, smooth mustard.

Tea, coffee, malted drinks, hot chocolate, squash, Oxo, Bovril, salt and pepper.



Foods you should avoid

Protein

Tough stringy meat.



Pulses, nuts and seeds

All varieties of pulses, nuts, seeds and beans.



Dairy

Fruit yoghurt containing skins or pips.

Ice cream containing fruit or nuts.

Starchy foods

Wholemeal flour, wholemeal brown bread, granary bread, soft-grain bread and rolls. Wholemeal crackers, such as Ryvita and Crackerwheat.

Whole wheat biscuits, such as digestives and Hob Nobs.

Whole wheat pasta and brown rice.

Pearl barley, spelt, quinoa, bulgar wheat, gnocchi.

High-fibre breakfast cereals, such as Weetabix, Bran flakes, muesli, All Bran, Shredded Wheat, porridge and Fruit and Fibre.



Fruit

Fruit with skins, pips or seeds, such as strawberries, citrus fruit, gooseberries, rhubarb.

Fruit juice with bits.

Tomato and prune juice.

All dried fruit.



Foods you should avoid

Vegetables

Peas, pulses, celery, radishes, cucumber, spring onions, sweet corn, cabbage, brussel sprouts, vegetable stalks, cauliflower and broccoli stalks, tomatoes, leeks.

All vegetable skins, pips, seeds, stalks and peel.

Soup containing vegetable chunks.



Sweets

Rough-cut marmalade, jam with pips.

Sweets, chocolate, cakes, and biscuits with dried fruit, nuts or coconut.

Miscellaneous

Pickles and chutney.

Wholegrain mustard.

Coleslaw.

Popcorn.

Tortilla crisps.



We welcome your feedback on this booklet. Please email ovacome@ovacome.org.uk or call 0800 008 7054. If you would like to discuss anything about ovarian cancer, please phone our support line on 0800 008 7054 Monday to Friday between 10am and 5pm. You can also visit our website at www.ovacome.org.uk. This is one of a series of information booklets produced by Ovacome. You can see them here: ovacome.org.uk/information.

Reviewed by:

Rachel White, Specialist dietitian, University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust

Disclaimer

Ovacome booklets provide information and support. We make every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information at the time of publication. The information we give is not a substitute for professional medical care. If you suspect you have cancer, you should consult your doctor as quickly as possible. Ovacome cannot accept any liability for any inaccuracy in linked sources.

Version 2.3 | Date last updated May 2023 | Date for review May 2026



Support line: 0800 008 7054
Office phone: 0207 299 6654
Website: www.ovacome.org.uk
Email: ovacome@ovacome.org.uk

Ovacome is a charity. We receive no government funding and most of our funding is provided by our community of supporters. We want to continue providing free support and information to people when they need it most. If you can, then please help us by making a donation. You can scan the QR code to the right or visit www.ovacome.org.uk/donate.



Registered with



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

Charity number **1159682**