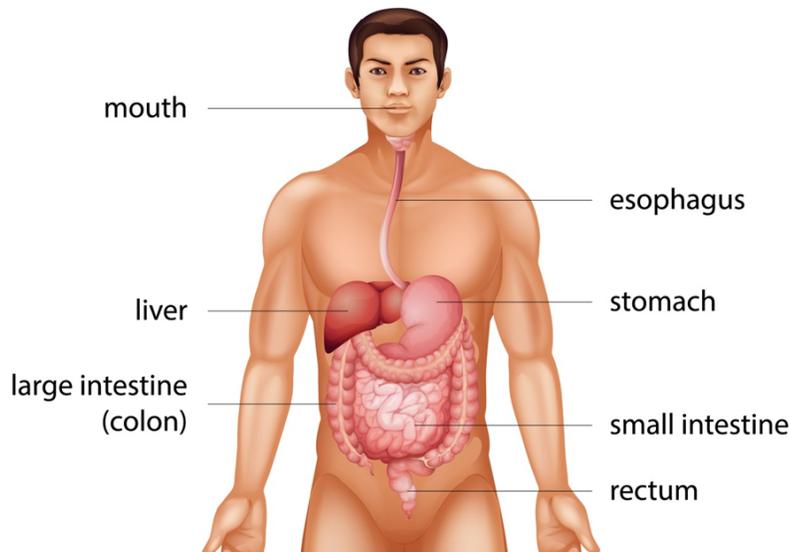


## Diet after Colectomy

### What is a colectomy?

A colectomy is a surgery to remove part, or all, of the colon. The colon is also called the large intestine or large bowel. The colon is the last section of the intestine, just before the rectum. See diagram below.



### What does the colon do?

The colon is the end of the digestive and absorptive system. It has many important functions in the body. One of its main functions is absorbing water from digested food. In addition, various types of normal gut bacteria grow in the colon where they ferment undigested food, which in turn produces gas.

### Do I need to change my diet after a colectomy?

Since part, or all, of your colon has been removed, it is now shorter, and may function differently than before surgery. You may develop diarrhea, gas, and dehydration. These symptoms may be reduced through changes to your diet. Over time, your remaining colon may slowly adapt and function normally again.

### Diarrhea

Depending on the area of the colon removed, and how much is removed, you may have loose stools or diarrhea after surgery. Large meals, fried foods, spicy foods, and foods that are high in sugar can cause diarrhea or make it worse. Below are a list of foods that can worsen diarrhea and a list of foods that may help reduce diarrhea.

| Food              | May cause or worsen diarrhea  | May reduce diarrhea  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>Starches</b>   | Whole grains: brown rice, bran, whole wheat pastas, whole grain breads and tortillas  | Refined grains: white rice, bread, and pasta   |
| <b>Vegetables</b> | Raw vegetables and salads<br><br>Broccoli, spinach<br><br>Legumes: black beans, garbanzo, kidney, navy beans, pinto, split peas and lentils     | Peeled potatoes<br><br>Cooked, peeled vegetables   |
| <b>Fruits</b>     | Skins of fruits<br><br>Prune juice, grape juice   | Peeled fruits: apples, applesauce, banana, guavas, pears, plums  |
| <b>Diary</b>      | Milk  | Cheese   |
| <b>Nuts</b>       | Nuts  | Smooth nut butters, peanut butter  |
| <b>Others</b>     | Alcohol, caffeine, licorice<br><br>Added sugar: honey, syrup, sweetened beverages, candies, cakes, pies, cookies, sweets, desserts and pastries | *100% soluble fiber supplements: such as Fibersure, Nutrisource fiber, FiberChoice, Citrucel, FiberCon, Equalactin |

\* Ask your doctor about using fiber supplements to reduce diarrhea.

### Dehydration

The first sign of dehydration is thirst. Prolonged dehydration leads to less urination. You may also feel tired, weak, faint, short of breath, or have stomach pain or dry skin. Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Have at least 8 to 10 cups of fluid per day. You should drink more during hot weather, when you exercise, and to replace fluids lost through diarrhea.

**Gas and odor**

Reduce gas by eating smaller, more frequent meals and snacks. Take smaller bites of food, and chew well. Other tips to reduce gas:

- Do not chew gum
- Avoid drinking with straws
- Stop smoking
- Eat slowly

Avoid gas- and odor-causing foods if they worsen your symptoms. Add foods that may decrease odor.

| May cause gas or odor  | May reduce odor  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Starches:</b> bread, potato, wheat germ, pastries, pretzel</p> <p><b>Proteins:</b> beans, peas, eggs, fish</p> <p><b>Fruits and vegetables:</b> asparagus, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrot, celery, cauliflower, eggplant, garlic, lettuce, leek, onion, raisins</p> <p><b>Dairy:</b> milk and milk products</p> <p><b>Beverages:</b> alcohol- especially beer, carbonated beverages, prune juice</p> | <p>Buttermilk</p> <p>Cranberry juice</p> <p>Kefir</p> <p>Parsley</p> <p>Yogurt</p> |

Not everyone reacts the same way to the same foods. Keep a log to track foods that cause symptoms or bother you. Stop eating problem foods for 2-3 weeks. Then add back one food at a time. Start with small portions to see if the food still causes symptoms. Wait a few days before adding back another food.

Diagram on first page adapted from Colon Cancer Alliance.