



Many patients who are having radiotherapy to the pelvic area have problems with diarrhoea. This is due to damage to the absorptive layer of the gut. This will start to improve after your radiotherapy has finished but you may be worried about your diet in the short term.

It is important to know that changing your diet is unlikely to reduce or stop the diarrhoea and that you should discuss your symptoms with the doctor and radiographer who is treating you as they may be able to start you on some medications to reduce the diarrhoea.

**The aim of the diet is make sure you are getting as much nourishment from your food as possible and that your diet is balanced.**

If you find that certain foods seem to make the diarrhoea worse then try cutting them out of your diet. If the diarrhoea does not improve then reintroduce them back into your diet. Everybody is different and what affects one person will not necessarily affect you.

It is important that you have a balanced diet during this time, as you will be losing some of the goodness from your food.

Try to eat small meals regularly and take your time to chew your food well so you get as much goodness from your food as possible.

Eat foods from all the different food groups every day. The food groups are listed below.

Food Group	Examples
Starchy (Carbohydrates)	Chapatti, rice, potatoes, breakfast cereals, pasta
Protein	Lentils, dahl, eggs, meat, dairy products
Dairy	Milk, yogurt, cheese
Fatty Foods	Butter, ghee, margarine, oil, and foods such as Indian sweets, cakes, biscuits, crisps
Fruit and vegetables	All fresh, tinned and frozen varieties



There is no evidence that you should follow a low fibre diet during this time, so there is **no need** to routinely cut out wholemeal bread and breakfast cereals or reduce your fruit and vegetable intake. These provide you with valuable vitamins and minerals and if avoided you may not be getting a balanced diet.

If you do find that cutting down on fruit and vegetables helps your diarrhoea then try to reintroduce them without their skins. For example mango or custard apple can be peeled and eaten. Try also to include a glass of fruit juice per day. Root vegetables such as carrots and potato **may** be better tolerated than vegetables such as cauliflower, okra and spinach.

A recent American study reported that bananas and boiled rice may help diarrhoea. There is also no scientific evidence that cutting out dairy products will help with the diarrhoea either. It is recommended that you aim to get through the equivalent of 1 pint of milk per day to get enough calcium to help keep your bones strong. This will also help you get enough protein in your diet, especially if your appetite is not good during this time. **If** you do need to cut down on your dairy products you should try soya products that have extra calcium added to them.

If you are losing weight, please refer to the leaflet on how to build yourself up and if you are still worried then ask the Doctor, Nurse or Radiographer to refer you to a Dietitian.

Notes