

Nutrition for a High Output Ostomy



High output ostomy is when there is more output (poop) in your ostomy bag than usual.



High output can be serious. If you need to empty your bag every 2 hours or your output is greater than 6 cups (1.5 L) each day, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider.

You may need to go to the hospital.

For children, your surgeon or ostomy doctor (gastroenterologist) will tell you what to expect for normal output and what is high output. This may be based on your child's weight.

Sodium and potassium loss

Sodium (salt) and potassium are electrolytes needed by the body. A high output ostomy removes these electrolytes from the body.

- Replace the sodium that is lost by adding salt to your meals and eating higher sodium foods. This can help replace losses from high output and help prevent dehydration.
- Vegetables and fruit are the best food sources of potassium.

Dehydration

When you have high output, it may be hard for you to drink enough to stay hydrated. This puts you at high risk for dehydration.

Watch for signs of dehydration

- Dry mouth and skin
- Feeling thirsty
- Feeling dizzy
- Headaches
- Low blood pressure
- Nausea
- Muscle cramping
- Peeing less or having dark pee
- Weight loss

Fluids

When you have high output, most of the fluids you drink daily should be oral rehydration solutions (ORS). ORS hydrate better than other fluids when you have high output. They help replace both fluid and electrolytes.

You can buy ORS at most pharmacies. Some brands include Pedialyte® and Hydralyte®. Visit ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts for “oral rehydration solution recipes” you can make at home.

Try to limit water and other fluids you drink to 4 cups (1 L) daily. Other fluids include milk, fortified soy beverage, herbal tea, soup, and broth.

Try to choose drinks that don't have too much sugar or caffeine. See “Food and drinks that may increase output” on page 2 to learn more.

Age (years)	Recommended amount of fluid to drink daily	
	Females	Males
2–3	4 cups (1 L)	
4–8	5 cups (1.2 L)	
9–13	6 cups (1.6 L)	7 cups (1.8 L)
14–18	7 cups (1.8 L)	10 cups (2.6 L)
18–64	9–12 cups (2.25–3 L)	
65+	6–8 cups (1.5–2 L)	

You may need more than the recommended amount of fluid daily. Drink more after being active or if it's hot outside.

Food and drinks that may increase output

- Limit or avoid foods high in sugar, such as:
 - candy, chocolate
 - dried fruit
 - fruit canned in syrup
 - sweet desserts
 - sweetened yogurt
 - sugary cereals
- Limit or avoid drinks high in sugar, such as:
 - flavoured milks, like chocolate milk
 - fruit juices
 - fruit flavored drinks and pouches
 - iced tea, regular pop
 - yogurt drinks
- Some nutrition supplements can be higher in sugar. Choose those with less sugar like Glucerna® or Boost® Carb Smart.
- Limit or avoid sugar alcohols, which are a type of sugar substitute. Check ingredient lists on food labels for:
 - erythritol
 - isomalt
 - maltitol
 - mannitol
 - sorbitol
 - xylitol
- Avoid alcohol when your output is high.
- Limit or avoid caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea, cola, and energy drinks. Caffeine stimulates the gut and increases output.
- Limit foods high in insoluble fibre, such as:
 - beans
 - dried fruit
 - nuts and seeds
 - skins on fruits and vegetables
 - vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and onion
 - whole grains
- Limit or avoid:
 - fatty meats like bacon, salami, and bologna
 - milk (if you are intolerant to lactose)
 - spicy foods, if not used to eating them

Tips to slow ostomy output

- Some foods may help to thicken and slow your ostomy output. Try:
 - hard cheese
 - marshmallows (3 large)
 - salted pretzels
 - smooth peanut butter
 - tapioca
 - white bread and pasta
- Soluble fibre in foods can also help absorb liquid and thicken poop. Eat foods with soluble fibre such as:
 - applesauce
 - bananas
 - barley
 - black beans
 - cooked carrots
 - oat bran
 - oatmeal
 - peeled and cooked sweet potatoes
 - peeled fruit, like apples and pears
- You can also try soluble fibre supplements like Benefibre® or Metamucil®.
- Drink fluids between meals and snacks. This can help slow the movement of food through your gut and help with nutrient absorption.
- Monitor how you feel after eating or drinking different food or fluids. See if you notice any change in your output.

If you have tried these tips and your output doesn't thicken, or gets worse, contact your doctor or healthcare provider.

For more support



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.
- Visit [ahs.ca/Nutrition](#).

