



Nutrition Handbook

Low Anterior Resection Surgery for Rectal Cancer

Kaiser Permanente – Northern California

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Introduction

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The Low Anterior Resection (LAR) surgery removes the last 6-8 inches of the large intestine (known as the rectum) and attaches the large intestine and remaining rectum together in what is called an anastomosis. Once you have had surgery, you will likely have many questions about how your diet will change. Although your food options will be more limited in the beginning, it is important to maintain your nutrition for healing and preventing undesired weight loss.

This packet contains nutrition information and tips that can help you as your body adapts to surgery.

Please keep in mind that every person responds differently to surgery and at different timelines.

General Diet Information – What can I eat when I come home from the hospital?

- ◆ Follow a low fiber diet for ~2-3 weeks after the surgery.
- ◆ See tables on pages 3-4 for foods to avoid and better choices.
- ◆ Chew your foods well.
- ◆ Try to eat on a schedule.
- ◆ Many people find small frequent meals more tolerable (5- 6 per day).
- ◆ Avoid skipping meals; it may increase gas and worsen watery stools.
- ◆ Try to eat in a relaxed atmosphere.
- ◆ Focus on overall balanced eating and try to limit processed foods and excess sugar.
- ◆ Include protein sources during meals and snacks.
- ◆ If you are having diarrhea, increase your intake of potassium-rich foods to replenish your potassium levels. Potassium-rich foods include red meat, fish, poultry, bananas, dairy products, avocado, potatoes, and sweet potatoes.
- ◆ If weight loss occurs, consider drinking a nutritional supplement (e.g. Ensure[®], Boost[®], Orgain, Kate Farms) and add higher calorie foods (e.g. avocado, olive oil, butter, smooth peanut/almond butter).
- ◆ After ~2-3 weeks, you should gradually increase fiber as tolerated (see page 9 for information on transitioning to a high-fiber diet).

Food Tables

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Food Group	Avoid for 2-3 weeks after surgery	Good choices for 2-3 weeks after surgery
Starches and Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Whole wheat or whole grain breads, rolls, crackers, or pasta ◇ Brown or wild rice ◇ Barley, oats, and other whole grains, such as quinoa ◇ Cereals made from whole grain or bran, such as shredded wheat or bran flakes ◇ Breads or cereals made with seeds or nuts ◇ Popcorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Choose grain foods with less than 2 grams of fiber per serving. ◇ Refined white flour products (for example, crackers, pasta, or enriched white bread without seeds) ◇ Cream of wheat or rice ◇ Grits (fine-ground) ◇ Tortillas (white flour or corn) ◇ White rice, well-cooked (do not rinse or soak before cooking) ◇ Cold and hot cereals made from white or refined flour, such as puffed rice or corn flakes
Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Steak, pork chops, or other meats that are fatty or have gristle ◇ Fried meat, poultry, or fish ◇ Seafood with a tough or rubbery texture, such as shrimp ◇ Luncheon meats, such as bologna and salami ◇ Sausage, bacon, or hot dogs ◇ Dried beans, peas, or lentils ◇ Hummus ◇ Sushi ◇ Nuts and chunky nut butters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Lean, very tender, well-cooked poultry or fish; red meats: beef, pork or lamb (slow cook until soft; chop meats if you have stricture or ostomy) ◇ Eggs, well-cooked ◇ Smooth nut butters, such as almond, peanut, or sunflower ◇ Tofu
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Alfalfa or bean sprouts ◇ Raw or undercooked vegetables: beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard, mustard, or turnip greens, corn, cucumber, green peas or any kind of peas, kale, lima beans, mushrooms, okra, olives, pickles and relish, onions, parsnips, peppers, potato skins, sauerkraut, spinach, tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Canned and well-cooked vegetables without seeds, skins, or hulls ◇ Carrots or green beans, cooked ◇ White, red, or yellow potatoes without skins ◇ Strained vegetable juice

Food Tables

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Food Group	Avoid for 2-3 weeks after surgery	Good choices for 2-3 weeks after surgery
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Raw or dried fruit ◇ Avocado, berries, coconut ◇ Canned fruit in syrup ◇ Canned fruit with mandarin oranges, papaya or pineapple ◇ Fruit juice with pulp ◇ Prune juice ◇ Fruit skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Soft, and well-cooked fruits without skins, seeds, or membranes ◇ Canned fruit in juice: peaches, pears, or applesauce ◇ Fruit juice without pulp diluted by half with water may be tolerated better ◇ Fruit drinks fortified with vitamin C may be tolerated better than 100% fruit juice
Dairy and Dairy Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Yogurt* with fruit, granola, or nuts ◇ Pea milk and soymilk (may cause diarrhea, gas, bloating, and abdominal pain) <p><i>* If lactose intolerant, you may need to avoid milk, cream, yogurt, half-and-half, ice cream. Foods marked with an asterisk (*) have lactose.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Milk*: fat-free, 1% or 2% (choose best tolerated) or lactose-free milk ◇ Buttermilk* ◇ Fortified non-dairy milks: almond, cashew, coconut, or rice (<i>be aware that these options are not good sources of protein so you will need to eat an additional protein food</i>) ◇ Kefir* ◇ Yogurt*/lactose-free yogurt (without nuts, fruit, granola or chocolate) ◇ Mild cheese* (hard and aged cheeses, such as cheddar, swiss, or parmesan, tend to be lower in lactose) ◇ Cottage cheese* or lactose-free cottage cheese ◇ Low-fat ice cream* or lactose-free ice cream ◇ Sherbet* (usually lower lactose)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Beverages containing caffeine: regular coffee, regular tea, soda, and energy drinks may cause diarrhea ◇ Avoid beverages sweetened with sorbitol or other sugar substitutes ◇ Alcoholic beverages 	

Hydration

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Most people need ~8 cups of fluids each day. If you are having diarrhea, you will need more fluids and electrolytes to replace those lost in the stool. Starting oral rehydration solution (ORS) can maximize the absorption of fluids in the GI tract. Try Pedialyte[®] or make your own ORS (see chart below). Try to take sips throughout the day instead of trying to gulp it down. Freezing into ice cubes, ice chips, or popsicles can be another way to take the rehydration beverage.

Eat foods that can help lessen diarrhea and foods high in potassium to replace losses from diarrhea. Avoid beverages that can worsen diarrhea such as any caffeinated beverages (includes regular coffee, regular tea, colas and energy drinks), high sugary beverages (especially those with high fructose corn syrup) or beverages sweetened with sorbitol, and alcohol. Try limiting high-lactose foods or beverages to see if it helps lessen diarrhea. Avoid very fatty or fried foods.

HOMEMADE ORAL REHYDRATION SOLUTION (ORS) RECIPES

Simple ORS

- ◇ 1 quart water
- ◇ ½ teaspoon table salt
- ◇ 2 Tablespoons sugar
- ◇ Optional: Crystal Light[®] to taste (especially lemonade or orange-pineapple flavors)

Gatorade Base

- ◇ 4 cups Gatorade[®] G2 (or one, 32-ounce bottle)
- ◇ ¾ teaspoon table salt; if too salty, try ½ teaspoon of salt per 32 oz

Broth Base

- ◇ 4 cups water
- ◇ 1 dry chicken broth cube
- ◇ ¼ teaspoon table salt

Or

- ◇ 2 cups liquid broth (**not** low sodium)
- ◇ 2 cups water
- ◇ 2 tablespoons sugar

Vegetable Juice Base

- ◇ 2 ½ cups plain tomato juice (not V8[®] or Bloody Mary mix)
- ◇ 1 ½ cups water

Fruit Juice Base

- ◇ ¾ cup fruit juice
- ◇ 3 ¼ cups water
- ◇ ¾ teaspoon table salt

Cereal Base

- ◇ ½ to 1 cup precooked baby rice cereal
- ◇ 2 cups of water
- ◇ ½ teaspoon salt
- ◇ Combine ingredients and mix until well dissolved and smooth
- ◇ Refrigerate
- ◇ Solution should be thick, but pourable and drinkable

Fiber

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Fiber is the nondigestible portion of plants that can help manage stool output. Every plant-based food has varying amounts of fiber and is typically a mixture of soluble and insoluble fiber.

Depending on your stool output/consistency, you may need to have more of one type of fiber. The list on page 7 gives examples of what foods may contain more of each type of fiber. For overall health, you should aim for 25-38 grams of fiber per day.

As fiber intake is increased, water intake should also be increased to prevent constipation.

Over-the-counter Fiber Supplements

In addition to food, a fiber supplement may help with your bowel movements. Fiber supplements can help bulk up the stool by absorbing more water. Additionally, some find it will help decrease the frequency of bowel movements.

- ◆ Build up your dose: Start with a teaspoon of fiber supplement in 8 ounces of water and slowly increase to a heaping tablespoon over a week.
 - ◇ Try different timing for taking the fiber and learn what suits you best
 - ◇ First, try taking it in the morning.
 - ◇ If taking the fiber in morning seems to increase bowel movements at night, you can try taking it in the evening.
 - ◇ You can also experiment with taking fiber up to three times each day.
- ◆ Be consistent with the same regimen for at least 2 weeks before trying a different regimen. It takes your digestion time to adjust.
- ◆ You can try Benefiber Original, Citracel, Nutrisource Fiber, Konsyl, Metamucil.
 - ◇ Avoid the artificially sweetened products.
 - ◇ If experiencing gas, try the following brands: Benefiber[®] Healthy Balance, Sunfiber[®], or NutriSource[®] Fiber.

Fiber: Soluble vs Insoluble

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Soluble fiber: Attracts water and turns to gel which slows digestion. Increase intake of soluble fiber if having watery, very loose stools.

Insoluble fiber: Adds bulk to your stool which helps move waste through your body and prevents constipation.

Both: Foods containing a mixture of soluble and insoluble fiber.

SOLUBLE FIBER	INSOLUBLE FIBER	BOTH
Fruits		
Applesauce, apricots (fresh and dried), bananas, figs (dried), mangoes, orange (flesh only), papayas, prunes, watermelon	Apples, avocado, berries, cherries, citrus, grapes, melons, nectarines, peaches, pears, pineapple, plums, raisins	Dried fruits and berries with seeds can contribute to anal irritation. Have small amounts and monitor for tolerance. <i>Peeling the fruit will decrease insoluble fiber.</i>
Vegetables		
Asparagus, brussel sprouts, carrots, potatoes (peeled), pumpkins, sweet potatoes (peeled), winter squash	All raw vegetables. Cooked vegetables including: bell pepper, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, green bean, kale, leeks, mushroom, onion, peas, shallot, tomato	Raw vegetables may contribute to anal irritation. Cooking may be better tolerated. <i>Peeling the vegetable will decrease insoluble fiber.</i>
Grains, nuts, beans		
White bread, white pasta, white rice, flour tortilla, cooked oatmeal, sourdough bread Beans (black, navy, kidney)	Whole wheat products (bread, cereal, flour, pasta, tortilla, etc.), wheat bran, cooked barley, granola, muesli, popcorn, quinoa, seeds, nuts, beans, lentils, soy	Beans are a good source of fiber (both soluble and insoluble), mashing or puree may be better tolerated

Foods and Common Symptoms

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FOODS THAT MAY CAUSE LOOSER OR MORE FREQUENT STOOL

Limit these items if having ongoing diarrhea/loose stool.

- Alcohol
- Beans
- Bran
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Caffeinated drinks
- Chocolate
- Corn
- Fried foods
- Spicy foods
- High fat foods
- Fruit (fresh, canned or dried, especially apricots, peaches, plums, prunes and prune juices)
- Fruit juice
- High sugar foods and beverages
- Licorice
- Milk and other high lactose foods
- Nuts or seeds
- Raw vegetables
- Sugar-free foods or beverages containing sugar alcohol (mannitol or sorbitol)
- Whole wheat/grains

FOODS THAT MAY HELP IF HAVING DIARRHEA

Try to include these foods at each meal if having ongoing diarrhea.

- Applesauce
- Bananas
- Barley (when able to have fiber)
- Cheese
- Marshmallows
- Oatmeal
- Pasta (plain and w/o sauce)
- Peanut butter (creamy)
- Potatoes (skinless)
- Pretzels
- Saltines
- Tapioca
- White bread
- White rice
- Yogurt (without nuts, seed or fruit)

Transitioning to a Higher Fiber Diet

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The goal is to add foods, slowly and one at a time to assess your tolerance. Go at your own pace. People often take around 2-4 weeks to slowly increase fiber in their diet.

Here is a plan to help you incorporate higher fiber foods into the initial low fiber/soft diet:

1. Add one, then two servings of fresh fruit (peeled) per day, such as peaches, pears, apples, etc.
2. Add one serving per day of any type of new vegetable (cooked).
3. Slowly incorporating higher fiber grains. Ex. add 1 slice of whole wheat bread, or a scoop of brown rice.
4. Add a serving of fruit with the peel on, such as an apple.
5. Add a small serving of raw veggies; possibly start with a peeled/seeded raw vegetable, such as peeled/seeded cucumber.
6. Add one serving of well-cooked beans/lentils; such as a serving of hummus or small bowl of lentil soup.
7. Try a crunchy nut butter.



Frequently Asked Questions

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I feel more gassy than I used to. What can I do?

To reduce gas, avoid chewing gum, limit use of straws, avoid carbonated beverages, eat slowly, no skipping meals, limit sugar free candies as they typically contain sorbitol (sugar alcohol that is not absorbed but can be fermented by gut bacteria), limit high-lactose foods.

Can I drink coffee?

Regular coffee or other caffeinated drinks (regular tea, energy drinks, colas) can stimulate GI tract which increases motility leading to looser and more frequent stool.

Will probiotics help?

No research currently supports improved symptoms from taking probiotics. If interested, try to eat foods that are naturally high in probiotics rather than taking over-the-counter probiotic. These foods include kefir, kimchi, kombucha, miso, pickles, sauerkraut, sourdough bread, tempeh, and yogurt.

What can I eat, so I don't go to the bathroom so often?

- ◆ Don't skip meals and don't over-eat – it may lead to more gas and watery stools.
- ◆ Include foods that can help with diarrhea at each meal.
- ◆ Start a soluble fiber supplement.
- ◆ Limit food with high insoluble fiber (see examples on page 7) and foods that may cause looser or more frequent stool (see examples on page 8).
- ◆ Limit high-lactose foods even if you were not lactose intolerant before surgery, as some people may develop lactose intolerance after surgery.

Food Journaling

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As you increase the amount of fiber you eat and transition your diet, keeping detailed notes of each meal and your symptoms you have can be very helpful. Every individual has different symptoms and reactions. Because of this, staying organized with what foods you added and how they affected you is essential.

You may want to:

- ◆ Keep a Diet Diary
- ◆ Try a Mobile Application to keep organized:
 - ◇ *Cara Care* (app)
 - ◇ *BoWelle* (app)
- ◆ Include: food/portions, time, symptoms, stress/emotions
- ◆ See below for an example of a food journal. Use page 20 for more journaling.

Date/Time	Amount	Food/Beverage	Time of Symptoms	Symptoms	Stress/Emotions
Sample Entry: 10/14/20 9:30am	1 cup 1 small	Cow's milk Apple	10:00am	Bloating, cramps	Anxious about trying new food

3-Day Sample Menu

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To get started on a low fiber/soft diet when you go home from the hospital, use this 3-day sample menu:

Day 1	Food/Beverage	Approx. Calories	Approx. Grams of Protein
Breakfast	1 packet of cream wheat cooked with 1 cup milk (or milk alternative); Stir in ½ a very ripe mashed banana and 2 tbsp smooth peanut butter.	450	16
Snack	Hardboiled egg with 1 string cheese.	170	14
Lunch	Tuna salad sandwich with 2 slices sourdough bread, 1 tbsp mayo and mustard, and 3 oz of canned tuna; Serve with 1 cup low fiber soup (see recipes on pages 15-16).	450	25
Snack	Low fiber smoothie (see recipes on page 17).	350	15-25
Dinner	3-4 oz chicken thigh or firm tofu, sautéed in soy sauce and sesame oil; Served with 1 cup of rice; ½ cup of well-cooked carrots/zucchini.	500	25-35
Total		2000 calories	100 grams

3-Day Sample Menu

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Day 2	Food/Beverage	Approx. Calories	Approx. Grams of Protein
Breakfast	2 slices sourdough toast with 1 tsp of butter; 2 scrambled eggs; 1 oz cheddar cheese (naturally low in lactose).	450	21
Snack	½ cup drained canned peaches with ½ cup cottage cheese (available lactose free).	180	14
Lunch	2 cups low fiber soup (see recipes on pages 15-16) with 10 saltine crackers and 1 oz of cheese.	400	15
Snack	1 oz pretzels with 2 tbsp smooth peanut butter.	300	10
Dinner	1 cup cooked white pasta served with 3-4 oz ground turkey cooked in prepared tomato sauce; sprinkle with parmesan.	500	30
Total		1800 calories	90 grams

3-Day Sample Menu

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Day 3	Food/Beverage	Approx. Calories	Approx. Grams of Protein
Breakfast	Low fiber smoothie (see recipes on page 17).	350	15-25
Snack	8 vanilla wafers with 2 tbsp of smooth almond butter; 1 cup milk or non-dairy milk.	475	15
Lunch	2 cups low fiber soup (see recipes on pages 15-16); 1 dinner roll with 2 oz of cheddar cheese (naturally low in lactose).	450	25
Snack	6 oz Greek yogurt with ½ cup of canned fruit.	210	20
Dinner	4 oz cooked salmon with olive oil and lemon juice; 1 cup mashed potatoes; ½ cup well-cooked green beans.	450	30
Total		1900 calories	105 grams

Lower Fiber Soup Recipes

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Butternut Squash & Apple Soup

(adapted from "For The Love Of Soup" cookbook by Jeanelle Mitchell)

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Ingredients:

1 tbsp of butter

1 leek, white parts only, thinly sliced

½ onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves

1 large russet potato, peeled and diced

3 cups butternut squash, diced, peeled (many store have already peeled/chopped squash available)

2 apples, peeled, cored, chopped

2 cups of chicken or vegetable stock

2 cups of water

1 tbsp fresh lemon juice

1 cup milk

Salt and pepper to taste

2 tbsp fresh chives or parsley, chopped

1. In large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add leeks, onions and garlic; sauté for ~5 minutes.
2. Add potato, squash, carrots, apple, stock, water, and lemon juice and bring to a boil. Then lower the heat and simmer with a cover for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.
3. Puree soup in a blender, food processor, or with an immersion blender. Then pour in milk, season with salt and pepper. Garnish with chives or parsley.

Chicken and Rice Soup

(adapted from "For The Love Of Soup" cookbook by Jeanelle Mitchell)

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Ingredients:

2 tbsp of oil

1 leek, white parts only, finely diced

½ onion, finely diced

1 stalk of celery, diced

8 cups of chicken stock

2 bone-in chicken legs or 2 bone-in chicken breast pieces, skin removed

2 bay leaves

1 tsp fresh thyme, chopped, or ¼ tsp dried thyme

½ cup long-grain white rice

2 carrots, peeled and diced

¼ cup of parsley, chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

1. In a large saucepan, heat oil and add leeks, onions, and celery and sauté for ~5 minutes.
2. Add stock, chicken pieces, bay leaves, and thyme and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 40 minutes. Remove from heat.
3. Remove chicken pieces and place on a cutting board. When cool enough, remove meat from bones and discard bones. Cut chicken into small pieces and return to the saucepan. Then add rice and carrots. Turn back on heat, and simmer for 20 minutes until rice is cooked. Discard bay leaves and stir in parsley. Season with salt and pepper.

Lower Fiber Soup Recipes

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Tortellini Vegetable Soup

(adapted from "For The Love Of Soup" cookbook by Jeanelle Mitchell)

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Ingredients:

2 tsp of oil

1 small leek, white parts only, diced very finely

2 peeled and diced carrots

1 roasted, peeled bell pepper, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced

6 cups of chicken stock

2 cups of filled tortellini (choose filling based on preference)

Salt and pepper to taste

½ cup of grated parmesan

1. In large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add the leek, carrots, peppers and sauté for ~5 minutes. Then add garlic, and cook for an additional 2 minutes.
2. Add stock and bring to boil. Add tortellini and return to a boil and cook ~5 minute (or package instructions). Season with salt and pepper. Serve with cheese on top.



Lower Fiber Smoothie Recipes

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Pumpkin Pie Smoothie

(Recipe adapted from: Smoothies by Mary Corpening Barber)

Ingredients:

1 cup of milk (can also do lactose free milk or a non-dairy milk alternative)

½ cup of canned pumpkin

½ very ripe banana (frozen okay if preferred)

A pinch each of cinnamon and nutmeg

Honey to taste if desired

Ice

1. Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth.

Peaches and Cream Smoothie

Ingredients:

1 cup of milk (can also do lactose free milk or a non-dairy milk alternative)

½ cup of canned peaches, drained

½ frozen, ripe banana

½ cup of Plain or Vanilla Greek yogurt or dairy alternative yogurt

Ice

1. Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth.

Nutty Banana Shake

Ingredients:

1 cup of milk (can also do lactose free milk or a non-dairy milk alternative)

1 frozen, very ripe banana

1 Ttbsp of smooth nut butter (peanut, almond, cashew)

½ cup of Plain or Vanilla Greek yogurt or dairy alternative yogurt

Ice

1. Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth.

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