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had a colonoscopy before, you may be familiar with the diet and bowel preparatory process.The low fiber diet (also known as the "low residue diet") makes it easy to completely empty your bowels during the prep before surgery. Studies¹ have shown that following a low fiber diet before your bowel prep leads to the best outcomes. Your doctor may advise you to stay on the low fiber diet after surgery, as well.As a rule of thumb, you must avoid anything high in fiber, including any raw fruits or vegetables, any fruits or vegetables with skin or seeds (like blueberries), and any unrefined grains. You should also avoid spicy foods and liquids or sweets that are red, orange, or purple. (These colorings can leave residues in the bowels that look like blood.)Acceptable beverages:Coffee and tea Carbonated beverages (soda or seltzer/sparkling water)Pulp-free fruit drinksDairy - limit to two cups per daySoy or oat milkAcceptable bread, cereals, rice, and pasta:Refined/white bread, rolls, biscuits, and muffinsFancakes and waffles made with white flourCrackersPlain pastries, bagels, donuts, and English muffinsWhite riceRefined pastaAcceptable cereals:Refined, cooked cereals such as grits, cream of rice, and farina Refined cereals including puffed rice and corn flakesAcceptable desserts and sweets:Plain cakes and cookiesSorbet, popsicles, and Jell-O (avoid ANYTHING red, orange, or purple)Hard candies (again, avoid anything red, orange, or purple)Acceptable fats:Butter, margarine, salad oils, and dressingsPlain gravyMayonnaisePlain cream cheeseAcceptable fruits and vegetables:Most peeled, well-cooked and canned, seedless fruits or vegetablesBananas Applesauce or fruit cups (pineapple, pear, or peach fruit cups)Seedless jellyAcceptable meats and proteins:Ground or well-cooked lean beefHam, pork, poultry, or fishEggs, cheeseSmooth peanut butterAcceptable potatoes:Cooked white or sweet potatoes without skinHash browns, tater totsAcceptable condiments:Salt, pepper, mild spices, herbsSugarVinegar, ketchup, mustardIn some cases, your doctor may tell you to follow a soft diet leading up to and following your procedure. This diet is recommended for those with difficulty in chewing or swallowing. The soft diet is also recommended for those who may need to take extra precautions to soothe their digestive tracts.As its name implies, foods that require a lot of chewing are not permitted while following the soft diet. Instead, stick with soft, easy-to-digest foods, such as:Peeled and mashed vegetables, canned fruits, apple sauce, avocadoFarinaWhite bread and softened crackers (you can soak your crackers in milk to soften them)Cooked white pasta or riceClear brothBaked, poached, or broiled fishGround or thinly shaved meatTuna or chickenSilken tofuHard-boiled eggs and egg saladButter, margarine, cooking oils, or saucesIn most cases, you will begin your clear liquid diet 24 hours before your procedure unless your doctor has advised otherwise. During this stage, you may not consume any solid foods, dairy, or beverages red, orange, or purple in color.However, the following liquids are safe to drink before colon surgery:Sports drinks — the electrolytes will help prevent dehydration during your laxative bowel prepClear brothApple juicePopsiclesSodaBlack coffeeBlack tealf you have diabetes, opt for low-sugar sports drinks, sodas, and popsicles.The foods you should avoid will vary slightly depending on whether you're following the soft diet or low fiber diet. If you're following the low fiber diet, you must avoid the following:AlcoholAny beverages containing fruit or vegetable pulpAnything red, orange, or purple Any pieces of bread, grains, pastries, or desserts made with whole-grain flour, bran, seeds, nuts, or coconutDried fruitPopcornOatmealWhole grain, bran, or granola cerealsAny cereals containing nuts, seeds, or coconutNon-white or non-sweet potatoesAny potatoes with skinAny meats that are fried or coated in a whole grain batterPeas, lentils, chickpeas, legumesChunky peanut butterHot or Cajun spices, hot sauceImmediately after surgery, it's important to treat your colon with care. You must give your body adequate time to heal and recover before diving back into a "normal diet." Being careful will help reduce nausea, food intolerances, and other adverse side effects that commonly occur after colon surgery.During your hospital stay, your care team will help you to reintroduce foods into your diet. At first, you may stay on a clear liquid and low fiber diet regimen until you're ready to start experimenting with "full liquids." Creamy soups, dairy, milkshakes, puddings, and ice creams are examples of full liquids.While reintroducing new foods, it's best to give yourself one to two hours to fully digest what you ate before trying anything new. That way, if you feel nauseous afterward, you'll be able to identify what might have upset your stomach quickly. For example, it's common to feel nauseous while reintroducing dairy into your diet after colon surgery.You may also find it easier to break your meals into four to six smaller portions throughout the day. Eating four to six smaller meals (as opposed to three large meals) helps reduce the stress on your colon.Some of the best foods you can eat after colon surgery are nutrient-dense, low fiber foods. You should continue to follow the low fiber diet, as outlined above, once you've been discharged from the hospital.How long to stay on a low fiber diet after colon surgeryYour care team will likely advise you to stay on a low fiber diet for one month after your surgery. Once it has been a whole month since your procedure, you may begin slowly reintroducing other foods into your diet with your doctor's advice. Again, take it slow and go easy on yourself.Your colon is a crucial part of your digestive system, and it's important to care for it as best as you can before and after surgery. In most cases, your doctor will advise you to follow a low fiber diet for three to seven days before your surgery. You may also have to follow a clear liquid diet for 24 to 48 hours while you're completing your bowel prep.After surgery, your care team will help reintroduce foods back into your diet. It's also likely that your doctor will recommend staying on the low fiber diet for a month after your procedure. This measure is taken to help reduce nausea and other symptoms that may occur following your surgery.Remember, you're in great hands, and you're not alone. More than 600,000² surgical procedures are performed to treat or prevent colon disease every year in the United States.Learn more about colon surgery here.