

BRAT Diet

Nutrition for Nausea, Vomiting or Diarrhea

Nutrition for nausea, vomiting or diarrhea consists of foods that are bland and gentle on the stomach. If you have nausea or vomiting, it may be hard to hold down food. Some foods may even make your symptoms worse. If you are experiencing diarrhea, the diet suggested below may help solidify your stools.

You may have heard of the BRAT diet which stands for **B**ananas, **R**ice, **A**pples, and **T**oast. The BRAT diet was often recommended for nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, but is no longer because of how restrictive it is. Below are lists of foods to focus on and avoid when experiencing nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, but there are many more foods that can be included.

FOODS TO FOCUS ON

- Soft fruits: bananas, applesauce, avocado, pumpkin, canned fruit (packed in water not heavy syrup), and melons
- Steamed or boiled vegetables: carrots, green beans, potatoes, and squash
- Low-fiber starches: white bread, white rice, saltine crackers, cream of wheat, instant oatmeal, and noodles
- Unseasoned skinless baked chicken or turkey, scrambled eggs, yogurt and kefir
- Drinks: bone broth, apple juice, coconut water, Pedialyte, weak tea
- **Homemade oral rehydration solution to prevent dehydration: 1 Liter of clean or boiled water, mix in 1/2 teaspoon of salt and 6 teaspoons of sugar and stir until both salt and sugar are completely dissolved. Cool down the water to room temperature or cooler before drinking.**

FOODS TO AVOID

- Avoid milk and dairy products for three days. Yogurt and kefir are okay
- Avoid fried, fatty, greasy and spicy foods
- Avoid pork, veal, salmon, and sardines
- Avoid raw vegetables such as parsnips, beets, sauerkraut, corn on the cob, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and onions
- Avoid citrus fruits: pineapples, oranges, grapefruits, lemons and limes
- Other fruits to avoid: tomatoes, cherries, grapes, figs, raisins, and seeded berries
- Avoid extremely hot or cold beverages
- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid coffee and caffeinated sodas
- Avoid added sugars and sweets like candy, soda and most juice

ADDITIONAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

- Choose liquids that contain some sugar and salt to prevent dehydration, such as Pedialyte or apple juice with a pinch of salt.
- Rest and avoid exertion to give your body a chance to recover.
- Consult your health care provider about taking medication.
- Nausea and vomiting may have different causes. Please contact your healthcare provider if these symptoms last more than 24 hours and seek immediate care if you cannot hold down clear liquids.
- Diarrhea may be "acute", beginning suddenly and resolving over a few days with dietary changes, or of a "chronic" ongoing process. Causes of diarrhea lasting more than 3 days should be discussed with your healthcare provider.

Additional symptoms that are concerning are: fever, weight loss, lightheadedness (feeling of faintness), rectal bleeding or abdominal pain.

SAMPLE DIET

Getting started (first few hours)

The most important step is preventing dehydration. Start with small, frequent sips of fluid as soon as you are able — a sip or two every 10 minutes of water, an oral rehydration solution (such as Pedialyte or the homemade recipe above), diluted apple juice, weak tea, broth, or bouillon. If vomiting is active, wait a short period (an hour or so) after the last episode, then restart with small sips. Sucking on ice chips, popsicles, or hard candy can help if nausea makes drinking difficult.

Note: There is no need to avoid all food for a full 24 hours. Current evidence shows that returning to eating early — once rehydration is underway and vomiting has settled — is safe and may help you recover faster (Shane et al., Clinical Infectious Diseases, 2017; Meisenheimer et al., American Family Physician, 2022).

Adding food (as soon as fluids are tolerated)

Once you are keeping fluids down, begin eating bland, easy-to-digest foods from the "Foods to Focus On" list above — for example, bananas, rice, applesauce, crackers, cooked cereals, toast, yogurt, cooked carrots, and skinless chicken or turkey. Eat small amounts every few hours rather than large meals. You do not need to wait until the next day to start eating.

Returning to your normal diet

Continue advancing toward your regular, age-appropriate diet as your symptoms improve, keeping meals small and frequent. Prolonged restriction to only bland foods is not necessary and can leave you short on nutrition. If symptoms persist, stay with the bland foods above and continue fluids, and contact your health care provider if diarrhea lasts more than 3 days or you notice any of the concerning symptoms listed above.