

Symptom Control - Dietary advice for people with gallstones

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

What are gallstones?

- Gallstones are small stones that can sometimes form in the gallbladder. They occur more commonly with increasing age. Obesity and pregnancy also increase the risk of developing gallstones.



How should I change my diet?

- Your doctor may have advised you to follow a low-fat diet because you have gallstones. Gallstones can cause pain, however, there is no evidence that reducing the fat in your diet will necessarily reduce the pain.
- Some people find that very specific foods trigger pain, this can be very individual and you may wish to avoid these foods for a trial period to see if the pain reduces.
- A low fat diet may be beneficial if you suffer with steatorrhoea (fatty stools) – these may be pale, floating, bulky and foul smelling.
- Your diet should not be “fat free”, a small amount of fat is needed by the body. The suggestions overleaf will help you to choose low fat foods, but still eat a varied and healthy diet.
- Make sure that your diet also contains plenty of fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables.
- You should also eat your normal amounts of bread, cereals, pasta, rice and potatoes. These foods are filling and low in fat – but make sure that you do not add too much fat or oil when you prepare them.


Please Note:

- After a cholecystectomy (removal of the gall bladder) you do not need to follow a low fat diet.
- A low fat diet may result in weight loss. If you are already slim and are concerned about this, please ask to be referred to a registered dietitian.
- If you are overweight, gradual weight loss can reduce the risk of developing gallstones. However, rapid weight loss (greater than 2 lbs or 1kg per week) may increase the chance of gallstone formation.

**Note: low fat = less than 3g total fat per 100g
high fat = 20g total fat per 100g**

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Reducing your fat intake

| Food Group | Avoid or eat less of these foods | Choose these foods instead |
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| Fats and Oils | Butter, margarine, lard, suet, cooking oils including olive oil, sunflower oil, vegetable oil. | Low fat spreads, such as Flora Light, Bertolli Light or half fat butters. Still use these sparingly. |
| Cooking Methods | Fried foods. | Grilled, boiled, baked, poached or casseroled foods. |
| Dairy Products | Full cream or Jersey milk. Evaporated and condensed milk. Full fat cheese, such as Cheddar and Stilton. Full fat soft cheese. Cream. Full fat yogurt. | Semi skimmed or fully skimmed milk. Low fat cheese, such as cottage cheese, Edam, half fat hard cheeses. Low fat soft cheese, such as Dairylea Light, Laughing Cow Light, Philadelphia Light. Low fat yogurt, such as Shape, Muller Light, Weight Watchers, Activia 0% |
|  Meats and Fish | Fatty and processed meat such as sausages, corned beef, beefburgers, meat pies, and tinned meat. Oily fish, such as mackerel, sardines, kippers, tuna in oil. | Red meat (if all visible fat is removed). Chicken and turkey (remove skin). White fish, such as cod, haddock, plaice, tuna in brine, shellfish, salmon. |
| Biscuits and Cakes | Digestives, cream and chocolate biscuits, Hob-Nobs. Cream cakes, Danish pastries, cakes with marzipan, sponge cake. | Crispbread, rice cakes, Rich Tea, Garibaldi, Morning Coffee. Low fat biscuits or cakes. Meringues. Scones, teacakes, crumpets – avoid adding too much butter/spread. Fatless sponge |
| Snack Foods | Crisps, nuts, Bombay mix. Seeds (including sunflower, pumpkin) | Low-fat crisps, Skips, French Fries, Quavers, breadsticks, Twiglets. Fruit (fresh, tinned and dried). |
| Confectionary | Chocolate, toffee, fudge, coconut. | Boiled fruit sweets, mints, Marshmallows, liquorice, Turkish Delight. |
| Desserts | Fruit pies, fruit crumbles. Milk puddings. Ice-cream. Gateaux. | Low fat yogurts (as above). Sorbet. Jelly, fruit – fresh, cooked or tinned. Low fat ice-cream Low fat milk puddings, such as custard or rice pudding. |
| Miscellaneous | Creamy dips, hummus, avocado pears, cream soups. Pastry foods such as quiche. Oil-based salad dressings, such as vinaigrette, mayonnaise. Cream and cheese sauces. Gravy made with fat or meat juices. | Low fat salad dressing, salsa dips. Tomato based or low fat cooking sauces. Sauces made with cornflour and low-fat milk and/or low fat cheese. Gravy made with stock cubes and cornflour (if used, meat juices should have the fat drained). Low fat ready made meals. |