

How the digestive system works

If you have an ileostomy or an internal pouch, the large intestine is no longer connected or has been removed and cannot absorb salt or liquid from the body's waste. This is why the output from an ileostomy or an internal pouch is not formed and contains more liquid. The small intestine does absorb liquid but not in the same way as the large intestine.

After swallowing, food and drink travels down the oesophagus (the pipe connecting your throat to your stomach) and into your stomach. Here strong digestive enzymes break down what you've eaten further before moving it into the small intestine. The small intestine digests and absorbs the nutrients in the food and drink we eat for use within the body. The remaining food moves into the large intestine or colon. The large intestine absorbs salt and around 80% of the liquid still present in your waste (faeces) before typically passing a formed stool (faeces).



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It is advisable that any problems you encounter you should contact your local stoma nurse and seek advice from them.



Information on

- Dehydration
- Rehydration

Rehydrating

Rehydration drinks are often referred to as 'sugar-salt' or 'carbohydrate-electrolyte' solutions. Examples of sugar-salt drinks that you can make at home are the St. Mark's and the Oxford Solutions – the recipes are shown below.

There are other available solutions such as Dioralyte® can be used (similar products from the pharmacy may also be as suitable), but to achieve the correct concentration (i.e. to make a drink that is more concentrated than the fluid in the body's cells so that the body absorbs it) they need to be made double strength (i.e. two sachets in a glass of water). These should not be taken in this form for long as they are too high in potassium.

Hydration Recipes **St. Marks Solution**

- 20g/six level 5ml spoonful's glucose
- 3.5g/one level 5ml spoonful salt
- 2.5g/one heaped 2.5ml spoonful sodium bicarbonate
- Dissolve in 1,000ml water.
- Keep chilled in the fridge.
- Flavour with a **small** amount of squash or cordial.

(You can get a 2.5ml/5ml measuring spoon from your pharmacist).

***From this list, do not drink in total more than 1000ml each day**

Sugary drinks e.g. lemonade, cola, high energy drinks

- Pure fruit juice
- Milk
- Tea
- Coffee
- Water
- Diet drinks

Drinking water

When you're thirsty it's normal to drink to quench your thirst. You can usually drink anything, especially lots of water. Your body uses it to keep the water content in your body at the required level (this is known as hydration). Water is vital as it helps digestion, helps to flush waste products from your body and helps to keep your skin and joints healthy. On average around two-thirds of your body is water.

If the water content in your body is reduced, this can upset the balance of minerals (sugar and salt) that the body needs.

If you have an ileostomy or an internal pouch you may need to think more carefully about what you drink in order to maintain your body's hydration.

Other foods to consider include:

- Low fibre foods (e.g. white bread, white rice)
- Ripe bananas
- Tapioca
- Marshmallows
- Jelly babies
- Smooth peanut butter
- Kippers
- Marmite®

With an ileostomy or an internal pouch however drinking lots of water alone may, on occasions, affect the balance of minerals (sugar and salt) and increase the risk of dehydration. This could be:

- if the output from your stoma or internal pouch is very watery or loose
- in hot weather
- during physical exercise
- if you are vomiting

if you already feel dehydrated (extra thirsty) .

Dehydration

Reducing the level of salt (sodium) in the body's cells to below the level needed by the body to work effectively, can lead to dehydration. If the symptoms are not recognised and you do not replenish the lost fluid effectively, in extreme cases this can lead to being hospitalised.

Initially you may experience symptoms such as

- thirst
- decrease in urine output
- darker colour urine
- lethargy
- nausea
- cramps
- dizziness
- dark rings under the eyes
- low blood pressure
- ringing in the ears.

To reverse these symptoms drink fluids that are more highly concentrated (contain more sugar and salt) than the water already in the body. Through the processes of 'osmosis and diffusion', as described above, drinking fluid containing higher levels of salt and sugar will enable its absorption by the small bowel and begin to rehydrate the body (increase the level of water).

Glucose (sugar) is also required to aid the absorption of salt from our food and drink otherwise the body cannot move the salt (sodium) from the bowel into the body's cells and the water will not be absorbed as quickly.