

Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet

What is graft versus host disease (GVHD)?

Graft versus host disease (GVHD) can happen after a stem cell transplant from another person. The cells from the donor (the graft) see your child's body (the host) as different and start to attack it. GVHD can affect different parts of the body like the skin, stomach and liver.

When GVHD affects the digestive system, it causes swelling and irritation inside the stomach and intestines. This makes it harder for the digestive system to break down food and absorb nutrients. This may cause:

- Frequent, watery diarrhea.
- Stomach cramping and pain.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up).
- Loss of appetite or feeling full faster than normal.

Why does my child need a GVHD diet?

The GVHD diet gives damaged intestines time to heal by giving foods that are gentler and easier to digest. Start with simple, bland foods. Add back other foods in stages as your child gets better (see pages 3 to 7).

What does the diet include?

The diet includes foods that are easy to digest and do not irritate the digestive system. This includes foods that are:

- Low in lactose (found in dairy products).
- Low in fiber.
- Low in sugar.
- Low in fat (bake, boil or steam only).
- Low in acid (avoid foods like lemons, limes, oranges, tomatoes and tomato based sauces).
- Caffeine free.

Do not give foods that are spicy, pickled or sour.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

Important tips to remember

Getting started

- Start with 1 new food at a time and a small portion size.
- Offer small meals or snacks every 2 to 3 hours. Avoid skipping meals.
- Avoid foods not on your approved list. They may worsen your child's symptoms.
- Provide drinks between meals, not during meals.
- Encourage your child to chew foods well and to eat and drink slowly.

Track your child's response to new foods

- Write down what they eat and how they feel after eating.
- Closely track and report symptoms to your child's care team.
 - Watch for increased stomach pain, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
 - Track bowel movements. This includes how much, how often and what they look like.
- Reporting your child's symptoms helps the care team to:
 - Know how well your child responds to treatment.
 - Decide when you can advance your child's diet to the next stage.

Moving to the next stage

- Talk with your child's dietitian or care team:
 - Before moving to the next stage of the diet.
 - Before adding foods that have not been discussed.

What to do if your child has symptoms

- Have your child stop eating the new food right away if they feel worse.
- Return to eating foods you know have not been a problem.
- Call your child's care team if symptoms do not get better in 24 hours.
- Do not try the problem food again until you talk with your doctor or dietitian.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor right away if your child has continued:

- Diarrhea or blood in stool
- Vomiting
- Abdominal (belly) pain
- Lack of interest in eating or drinking
- Symptoms that get worse

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Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

Food group	STAGE 1 Start with these foods	STAGE 2 Add these foods to your child's diet when your child's care team tells you to	STAGE 3 Add these foods to your child's diet when your child's care team tells you to
Starches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White bread: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dinner rolls – English muffins – Pita bread – Buns – Flour tortilla – Bagels • Plain pasta or noodles • White rice • Couscous • Plain potato gnocchi • White or sweet potatoes - boiled, mashed (dairy-free) or baked without skin • Crackers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Saltines – Soda crackers • Pretzels • Plain rice cakes • Hot cereals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cream of Wheat – Cream of Rice – Instant grits • Plain cold cereals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Puffed rice – Rice Krispies – Kix – Rice Chex – Crispix – Corn flakes – Cheerios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn tortilla • Baked chips (unflavored and low-fat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White baked goods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sourdough bread (store bought) – Waffles – Pancakes – Hot pretzels (from frozen) • Brown rice - limit to ½ cup cooked • Baked tater tots and French fries • Boxed macaroni and cheese made with low-fat milk and no butter • Plain instant oatmeal

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Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit to 8 ounces daily: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fat free/low-fat, plain, unsweetened soy, rice or almond milk – Crystal Lite – Caffeine-free tea – Sugar-free Kool Aid – Sugar-free sports drinks like Gatorade Zero or Powerade Zero – Pedialyte 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lactose-free, fat-free milk like Lactaid • Ensure Clear • Pediasure or Ensure diluted with equal parts of fat-free Lactaid milk or low-fat, dairy-free milk • Diluted drinks - mix at least 1 ounce (oz) water per ounce of one of these approved drinks (limit each to 4 ounces total daily): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Apple, cranberry or grape juice – Lemonade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undiluted Pediasure or Ensure • Low-fat cow's milk (skim or 1%) • Sugar-free soda or sparkling water - limit to 8 ounces daily
Dairy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lactose-free cheese - limit to 1 ounce serving per meal • 1 teaspoon (tsp) low-fat cream cheese or plant-based cream cheese per meal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard cheese: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cheddar – Swiss – Provolone – Parmesan • Low-fat or Lactaid cottage cheese • Low-fat Greek yogurt or yogurt with less than 7 grams (g) of sugar per serving • Low-fat sour cream • Low-fat, plain Kefir

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Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-cooked with skin removed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chicken breast – Turkey breast – Lean cooked ham • Packaged deli turkey and ham - heated to be steaming hot • Eggs - scrambled or hard-boiled, not fried • Mild, white fish, such as cod or tilapia - baked, broiled or steamed • Water-packed tuna • Imitation crab • Low-fat tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-cooked skinless chicken thigh • Ground beef or turkey (90% or 93% lean) • Well-cooked, low-fat meat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pork – Sirloin or tenderloin cut of beef with fat trimmed • Turkey bacon • Low-fat hot dogs • Veggie burgers - with less than 5 grams (g) of fiber per serving • Limit to 3 ounces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Salmon (cooked) – Shrimp – Crab – Lobster
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsweetened applesauce • Banana • Canned peaches or pears packed in juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ripe melon • Peeled, sliced apples • Peeled, sliced pears • Mandarin oranges canned in juice • Fruit and vegetable blended pouches

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Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned or well-cooked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Carrots – Green beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peeled and well-cooked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Zucchini – Squash • Cooked mushrooms • Cooked green bell pepper - limit to ¼ cup per meal • Canned green peas - limit to ½ cup • Peeled and seeded cucumber
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear broth - vegetable, beef or chicken • Fat-free bone broth - beef or chicken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noodle soup mix, such as Lipton • Low-fat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chicken rice soup – Chicken noodle soup – Plain Ramen noodle soup - add only ½ packet of seasoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blended vegetable soups (no tomato soup) • Homemade, low-fat cream soups or potato soup made with low-lactose milk
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugar-free popsicles • Sugar-free gelatin or Jell-O 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal crackers • Graham crackers • Vanilla wafers • Plain angel food cake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugar-free pudding made with fat-free or lactose free milk • Lactaid ice cream - limit to ½ cup • Low-fat pound cake
Fats and others (serving sizes per meal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 teaspoon (tsp) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Butter – Margarine – Oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 teaspoon (tsp) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cream-based soup used to flavor rice, pasta or other starches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tablespoon (TBSP) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gravy – Peanut butter – Ketchup – Mustard

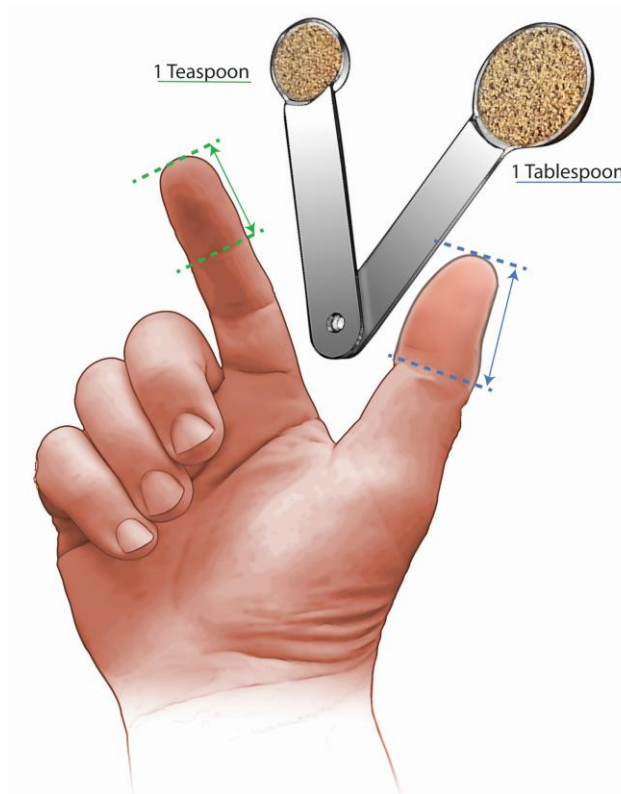
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Light mayonnaise - Peanut butter - Sugar-free jelly - Sugar-free syrup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Light mayonnaise - Low-fat salad dressing - Sauce made with low-lactose or low-fat milk • 1 teaspoon (tsp) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soy sauce

Please note that some foods may not be available during your child's hospital stay. See the inpatient menu for available options.

For fats and other condiments, you can estimate portion size for 1 Tablespoon (Tbsp) using your thumb tip and 1 teaspoon (tsp) using your index (pointer) finger tip.



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Reading a Nutrition Facts Label

- Read the Nutrition Facts Label on the back of packaged foods to see the serving size, grams of fat, grams of fiber and grams of sugar per serving.
- Low-fat foods have less than 3 grams of fat per serving.

Nutrition Facts		
Serving size: 12 crackers		
Amount per serving		
Calories	140	
		% Daily Value*
Total Fat	4.5g	6%
Saturated Fat	0.5g	3%
Trans Fat	0g	
Cholesterol	0mg	0%
Sodium	180mg	8%
Total Carbohydrate	20g	7%
Dietary Fiber	3g	11%
Total Sugars	0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars		0%
Protein	4g	0%
Vitamin D	0mcg	0%
Calcium	60mg	4%
Iron	1mg	6%
Potassium	150mg	4%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about the specific care of your child.

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