

Inflammatory Bowel Disease: helpful suggestions while on steroid treatment

Information for patients



Steroids

Steroids are a treatment used in IBD to reduce symptoms and inflammation. An 8-10 week steroid course is often used. Over this time the dose of steroids will be gradually reduced under guidance from the IBD team.

Children, young people and their families often worry about the side effects of steroids. Common dietary related side effects include:

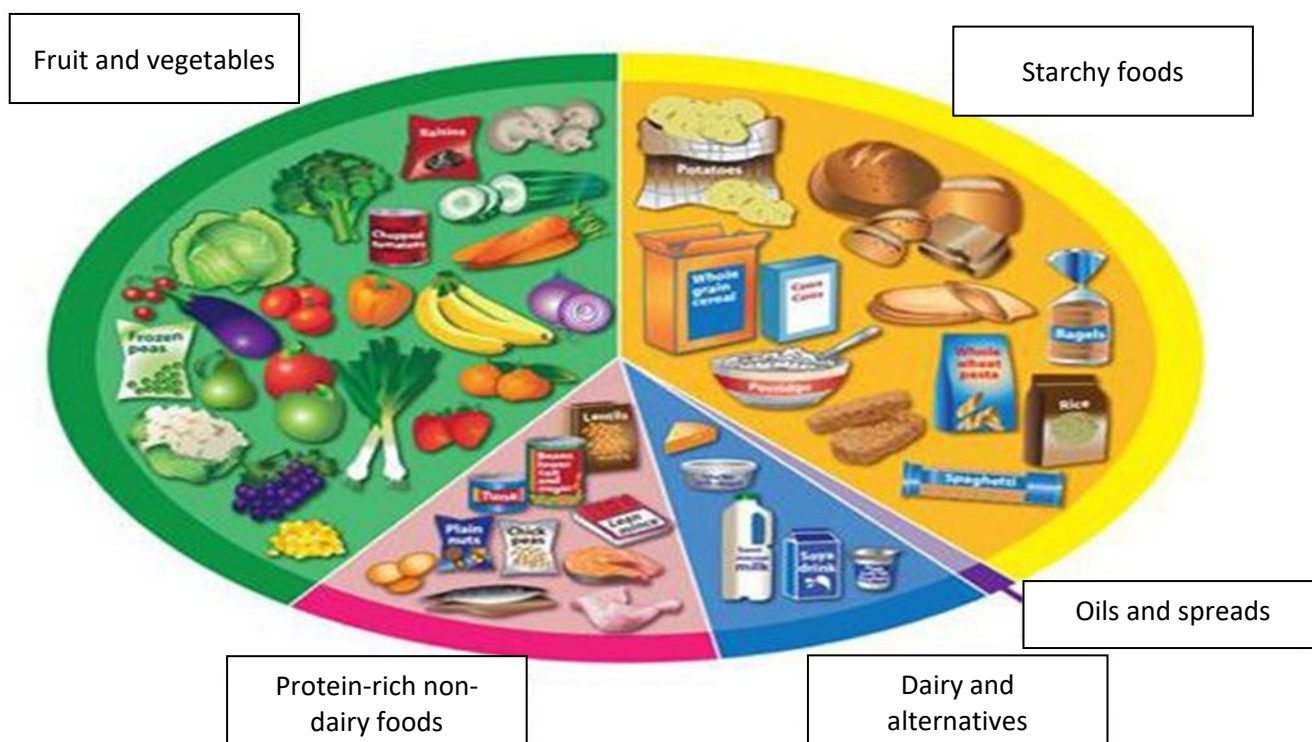
- Increased hunger, appetite and fluid retention, leading to unwanted weight gain.
- Reduced bone growth and strength, increasing the risk of Osteoporosis.

This information sheet provides some useful suggestions to help limit these side effects.

Note: Increased appetite and fluid retention will normally go away when the steroid dose is reduced to lower doses. It may take longer to lose any unwanted weight gain.

Healthy eating

Following a healthy balanced diet can help prevent or reduce unwanted weight gain. The Eatwell plate, below, shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group to have a balanced diet. It is based on everything you eat and drink over a whole day, not necessarily in each meal.



Nutritional information for each food group:

Food Group	Nutritional Information
Fruit and vegetables	Nutritious, low-calorie foods. Try to eat five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. They can be fresh, frozen, dried, or canned. Peeling fruit and vegetables may be helpful if you find fibre/fibrous foods cause abdominal discomfort.
Starchy Foods	Nutritious, low-calorie foods. Base main meals on bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and other starchy carbohydrates.
Protein-rich non-dairy foods	Include two portions of protein rich food each day. Choose lean meats, beans and/or fish. Protein helps to keep you fuller for longer, helping satisfy hunger.
Dairy and alternatives	Good sources of protein and calcium. There is more information about calcium later in the leaflet.
Oils and spreads	Unsaturated fats, found in rapeseed and olive oils are healthier than saturated fats found in butter and lard. Remember they all are high in calories and should be eaten in small amounts.

Salt intake

Steroids can cause you to keep hold of more fluid in your body, this is called fluid retention and contributes to weight gain. Additionally, if we eat too much salt, our body keeps hold of it, which increases the amount of fluid we drink and store in our body.

Limit your salt intake to the government's guidelines below (this includes the salt already in our food and the salt added during and after cooking):

- 1-3 years old: No more than 2g
- 4-6 years old: No more than 3g
- 7-10 years: no more than 5g
- 11 years and older: no more than 6g (approximately 1 teaspoon).

Tips to reduce your salt intake include:

- using spices, herbs, and black pepper to flavour foods
- using food labels: choosing foods with green or amber colour coded labels on their packaging
- choosing low salt options when possible, e.g. stock cubes and soya sauce
- choosing healthier snacks e.g. fruit, vegetables or plain rice cakes.

Exercise

Reduced physical activity is common when you have a flare of your IBD, due to pain and fatigue. Aim to gradually increase your activity levels as you start to feel better.

Regular exercise can help prevent or reduce weight gain from steroids. Try to find an activity you enjoy and you will be able to continue to do in the long-term. Whatever you can manage is positive, with the government recommending 60 minutes of activity each day, when you are well.

Regular weight bearing exercise also strengthens muscles, joints, and bones, e.g. running, dancing and aerobics.

The following link will give you more information on the current advice for exercise:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people



Top tips for preventing weight gain

- Eat breakfast every day; you are more likely to choose unhealthy snacks if you skip meals.
- Choose low fat dairy products, e.g. semi skimmed milk and low-fat yoghurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids each day. Substitute fizzy drinks for water or sugar free diluting juice. Drinking a large glass of water before you eat will reduce your appetite.
- Opt for wholegrain varieties to increase your fibre intake, which will make you feel fuller for longer.
- Snack on fruit and vegetables between meals.
- For a savoury snack, choose popcorn, rice cakes or baked crisps.
- Limit foods high in fat, including fried foods and takeaways.

Calcium and vitamin D

Calcium helps make our bones strong. Making sure you get enough calcium from your diet is important, especially when on steroid treatment. To meet your calcium requirements aim to eat three or four portions of calcium-rich foods each day. Milk and milk products like cheese and yogurt are one of the main sources of calcium.

If choosing a plant-based milk e.g. soya, oat, or almond milk, please buy calcium fortified milk as these all contain the same amount of calcium as cow's milk and will state 120mg/100mls on the label.

A guide to Daily Calcium Requirements:

Age	Calcium Requirement	Provided By: All of the below -		
		Cow's Milk	Yoghurt	Cheese
1-3 years	350mg	100ml	125g pot	-
4-6 years	450mg	200ml	125g pot OR 30g	
7-10 years	550mg	200ml	100g Greek	20g
Girls 11-18 years	800mg	300ml	125g pot	30g
Boys 11-18 years	1000mg	200ml	2x125g pot	45g

Vitamin D is required to absorb the calcium and both work together to help us have healthy bones and teeth. It is made under your skin when you are outside in daylight. It is also found in the diet e.g. in oily fish such as salmon, sardines, and kippers, with smaller amounts in eggs and fortified foods such as egg and milk. Your IBD team will monitor your vitamin and mineral levels and treat any deficiencies. You may however wish to take an over-the-counter Vitamin D supplement to prevent deficiency. Vitamin D supplementation (at least 10ug (400IU) of colecalciferol per day) is recommended for those living in Scotland, especially over the winter period of October to March.

