



Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

# Dietary advice for patients with gallstones

## Information for patients

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your dietitian \_\_\_\_\_

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## What are gallstones?

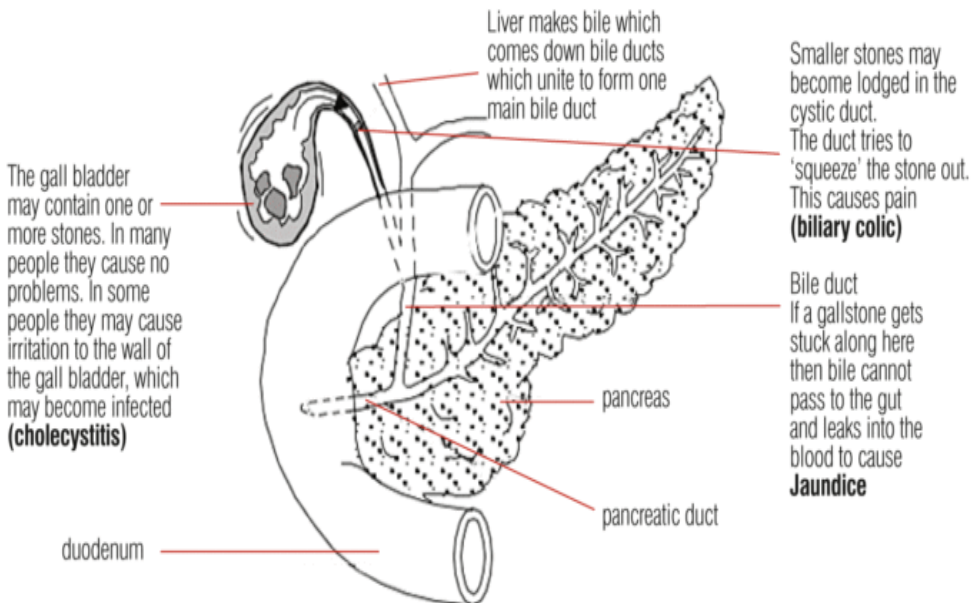
The gall bladder is a small sac lying on the underside of the liver. Bile produced by the liver is used to help digestion.

Bile is stored in the gallbladder and released into the small intestines when we eat fatty or oily foods. In some people the levels of cholesterol (a fatty substance) in bile becomes too high, and the excess cholesterol forms into stones. Gallstones can form in the gallbladder and move into the bile duct and may cause problems.

Gallstones are more common as you get older. Obesity and pregnancy also increase the risk of developing gallstones.

## What symptoms do gallstones cause?

Gallstones don't usually cause any symptoms, but if a gallstone blocks one of the bile ducts, it can cause sudden severe abdominal (tummy) pain and discomfort after eating, and particularly after a meal or snack containing a lot of fat.



## Do I need to change my diet if I have gallstones?

- The best diet to follow is a healthy well balanced diet that is high in fibre (at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day), high in starchy carbohydrates (such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes), low refined sugar and has a moderate fat content (20-35% energy in your total diet should come from eating fat).
- If you find any particular foods trigger your symptoms, you could trial avoiding them to see if this helps.
- Try to eat regular meals, as fasting reduces gall bladder emptying which increases the risk of stones forming.
- Some people with gallstones find that eating a diet lower in fat helps to reduce their symptoms of pain and nausea. However, this is not necessarily the case for everyone and also your diet should not be completely fat free, as a small amount of fat is needed by the body
- When using fat, avoid/reduce saturated fat (animal fat) and use plant based oils and spreads (olive, rapeseed, avocado) in sensible amounts.
- Keep to safe alcohol drinking limits [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk).
- Aim to cook and prepare fresh meals when possible, to reduce your intake of processed foods; preparing food in advance and storing it appropriately can help with this. When choosing ready prepared meals, use those with less than 15g of fat per portion and serve with extra vegetables or salad.
- If you are overweight, gradual weight loss can reduce the risk of developing gallstones (aim for a BMI of less than 25kg/m<sup>2</sup>). Trying to be physically active every day could help you achieve this and may help you feel healthier. However, rapid weight loss (greater than 2 lbs or 1kg per week) may increase the chance of gallstone formation.

## Do I need to change my diet if I have my gallbladder removed?

- If you have a cholecystectomy (removal of the gallbladder), you should be able to tolerate all foods and can return to a normal diet.
- If you have continuing symptoms, then these should be reported to your GP so the cause can be identified, and treatment offered. It is important to consider testing for bile acid diarrhoea, if diarrhoea is a symptom.
- A low fat diet may be beneficial if you suffer with steatorrhea (pale, yellow, orange or oily stools that may float or be foul smelling); however, seek medical or dietetic advice in order to manage this in the most appropriate way. **The low fat diet may contribute to weight loss, so please only do this under the supervision of a specialist healthcare professional.**
- If you are diagnosed with bile acid malabsorption, please ask your GP to monitor and replace your fat soluble vitamins (ADEK).

## Low fat alternatives

<b>Foods high in fat</b>	<b>Low fat alternatives</b>
<b><i>Fruit and vegetables</i></b>	
<p>Avocado Vegetables in a rich cream or cheese sauce Mixed salads with a mayonnaise based dressing e.g. potato salad or coleslaw Buttered or oiled vegetables Fruit pies / pastries</p>	<p>Fruit and vegetables All raw, boiled, steamed, dry fried or grilled vegetables Salad Fresh, canned or dried fruit</p>
<b><i>Bread, cereal and potato</i></b>	
<p>Deep fried chips, roast potato or potato wedges, oven baked chips Paratha, puri, bhatura, buttered naan</p>	<p>All breads e.g. pitta, wholemeal, granary, white Plain boiled rice, pasta, couscous or noodles Boiled, baked, mashed or dry roasted potato</p>
<b><i>Milk and dairy foods</i></b>	
<p>Whole milk, evaporated or condensed milk. Cream, full fat yogurt, ice cream, full fat cheese. Fried eggs, scrambled eggs with butter</p>	<p>Skimmed or semi-skimmed milk. Low fat Yogurt or fromage frais. Reduced fat cheeses such as; cottage cheese, low fat soft cheese, edam, half fat hard cheese. Boiled eggs, poached eggs, scrambled eggs (no butter).</p>

<b>Foods high in fat</b>	<b>Low fat alternatives</b>
<b><i>Meat, fish and alternatives</i></b>	
<p>Fatty meat e.g. sausages, beef burgers, meatballs, pies, faggots and the fatty edge from meat</p> <p>Duck, goose and any poultry skin</p> <p>Deep fried and battered fish, fish fingers / fishcakes, tinned or cooked oily fish</p> <p>Nuts / nut butters</p>	<p>Small, lean portions of beef, lamb, pork, ham or bacon grilled, stir fried (using a small amount of oil), casseroled, roasted chicken / turkey without the skin</p> <p>Grilled, steamed, baked, poached white fish / shell fish, tinned tuna in spring water, homemade fishcakes or fish fingers (not fried in oil/fat)</p> <p>Vegetarian alternative products such as Quorn, tofu, tempeh, seitan etc – check fat content as processed products could still have a high fat content – aim for less than 5g fat per 100g portion</p> <p>Beans and pulses</p>
<b><i>Fatty and sugary foods</i></b>	
<p>Chocolate</p> <p>Crisps, deep fried corn snacks/Indian snacks (e.g. Bombay mix)</p> <p>Biscuits</p> <p>Lemon curd / peanut butter</p> <p>Fudge / toffee</p> <p>Oils and fats—includes olive oil, coconut oil, lard, dripping</p> <p>Margarine</p> <p>Ice cream</p>	<p>Sugar</p> <p>Jam</p> <p>Jelly sweets</p> <p>Plain popcorn</p> <p>Low fat spreads (use sparingly)</p>

<b>Foods high in fat</b>	<b>Low fat alternatives</b>
<b><i>Other foods</i></b>	
Salad cream, mayonnaise, salad dressings, white sauce, cheese sauce, creamy sauces, gravy made with fat or meat juices Lemon curd, peanut butter, hummus	Ketchup, light mayonnaise, pickle, marmite, low fat or light salad dressings, salsa, tomato based sauces, white sauces made with cornflour and low fat milk, gravy made with stock cube and cornflour Sugar, honey, jam, golden syrup, marmalade, low fat hummus

**What should I eat if I am in a lot of pain?**

If the above dietary advice does not help alleviate pain or if you experience sudden or severe pain, seek medical advice.

**Further advice**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gallstones/prevention/>

<https://gutscharity.org.uk/advice-and-information/conditions/gallstones/>

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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