

## Low Iodine Diet

Iodine is a mineral that plays an important role in the production of thyroid hormones. The purpose of a low-iodine diet is to reduce the stores of iodine in your body. The low-iodine diet limits your iodine intake to about 50 micrograms per day. This will help increase the success of your radioactive iodine test or treatment. You will be asked to follow the low iodine diet for 7 to 14 days before your treatment or scan. You will stay on the diet for 1-2 days after your treatment or scan.

Iodine is found naturally in certain foods, but most of it comes from iodized salt, dairy products and breads. As a rule, eat fresh, home-made foods and have fruits and vegetables on hand. Add flavor to foods by using fresh or dried herbs, salt-free spice mixes, or vinegars.

### Food and Drinks with Iodine

Always read food labels to check the iodine content. Follow the guidelines below.

#### Avoid:

- Iodized salt or sea salt (foods that might have these ingredients include: chips, crackers, pretzels, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, tomato sauce, all store bought sauces, bottled salad dressings, gravies, bouillon cubes, frozen dinners, canned vegetables, packaged dinners).
- Seasoning mixes made with salt.
- Celery, garlic or onion salt.
- Seasoned salt
- Chicken/turkey with broth or additives injected into it.
- Seaweed (kelp, nori, kombu, wakame, seaweed tablets).

- Any of the following: agar-agar, carrageenan, iodates, iodides, algin, alginates.
- Seafood (fresh water fish is allowed).
- Milk and milk products such as cheese, yogurt, butter (regular or salted butter), ice cream, sour cream.
- Margarine
- Egg yolks, products made with eggs.
- Cured or pickled foods: ham, corned beef, sausage, lunch meats, sauerkraut, olives, pickles.
- Store-bought breads and bakery products, boxed cereals.
- Most chocolate (due to milk content). Cocoa powders and some dark chocolates are allowed.
- Vitamin and food supplements if they have iodine.
- Foods, drinks or medicine made with food dyes that are orange, red, brown. Examples may be a processed cereal, candy, cough syrup, cough drops, Jello<sup>®</sup>, Coke<sup>®</sup> or Pepsi<sup>®</sup>, Kool-Aid<sup>®</sup>.
- Sulfured molasses like blackstrap molasses. Unsulfured molasses is allowed.
- Soy products (soybeans or edamame, tofu, texturized vegetable protein (TVP), miso, soy milk and soy sauce, soy burgers such as Boca.<sup>®</sup>
- Avoid beans like red kidney beans, lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans, and cowpeas.
- Canned soups, canned vegetables.
- Rhubarb, maraschino cherries, strawberries, and potato skins (the inside of the potato is fine to eat).
- Liquid nutritional supplements and commercial shakes, such as Boost<sup>®</sup>, Ensure.<sup>®</sup>

## **Allowed Foods and Ingredients**

- Fresh fruits and vegetables (except for rhubarb and maraschino cherries).
- Frozen vegetables without added salt.
- Unsalted nuts and unsalted nut butters.
- Egg whites
- Fresh water fish (river bass, lake trout, river perch).
- Fresh meats without iodine ingredients.
- Grain, cereal, and pasta products that contain no high-iodine ingredients. This may include: plain cooked barley, oats, millet, buckwheat, bulgur wheat, quinoa, rice, plain noodles, puffed rice cereal or shredded wheat, unsalted grits and Cream of Rice® or Cream of Wheat® hot cereals, unsalted rice cakes, plain unsalted popcorn.
- Sugar, jelly, jam, natural honey, maple syrup.
- Black pepper, fresh or dried herbs and spices.
- Vegetable oil
- Dark chocolate (without salt, dairy, or soy).
- Juice (100% juice-not fruit punch), tea (loose or bagged), coffee (ground or instant freeze-dried), white or yellow soda and other unsalted carbonated drinks without red dye.
- Non-dairy creamer
- Homemade bread made with non-iodized salt and oil instead of regular or salted butter and milk.
- Canned peaches, pears, and pineapples.
- Fresh potatoes (sweet or regular) – no skin.
- Oil/vinegar dressings

## **Easy Quick Meals**

### **Breakfast**

- Orange juice, oatmeal, sweet butter (unsalted butter), sugar, brewed coffee
- Cooked oat bran, sugar, apple and orange
- 1 slice of toast with natural jam/honey, cream of wheat, fresh fruit

### **Lunch**

- Roast beef (or turkey), noodles, green beans, fresh apple, sweet butter (unsalted butter), graham crackers
- Baked potato, 3 oz. pork, apple, and orange
- Homemade vegetable soup, salad with homemade oil and vinegar dressing

### **Dinner**

- Lettuce, oil and vinegar, fresh pork, baked potato, fresh broccoli, sweet butter (unsalted butter)
- 3-4 oz. fresh poultry, roast beef, lamb, veal, pork, pasta (no salt or eggs) with homemade tomato sauce (sauce made from fresh tomatoes-not canned), fresh vegetable, coffee, tea or 100% fruit juice

### **Snack Ideas**

- Applesauce, carrot or celery sticks, homemade low-iodine bread or muffins, apple slices with unsalted peanut butter, real fruit popsicles or natural sorbets, unsalted Matzo crackers, popcorn, fresh fruit

**To Learn More**

To download a free, low-iodine cookbook visit these websites:

Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc:  
[www.thyca.org](http://www.thyca.org)

Light of Life Foundation:  
[www.checkyourneck.com](http://www.checkyourneck.com)

**Who to Call**

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below.

You can also visit our website at [www.uwhealth.org/nutrition](http://www.uwhealth.org/nutrition).

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH)  
**(608) 890-5500**

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF)  
**(608) 287-2770**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#485