

Low Iodine Diet

The low iodine diet is used before and after radioactive iodine therapy to treat certain people with thyroid cancer or hyperthyroidism. The purpose of this diet is to reduce the amount of iodine available to thyroid cells provided by the foods you eat. By following this diet, the thyroid cells will be “starved” of iodine and be more likely to absorb the radioactive iodine provided by treatment. The radioactive iodine will then be more likely to destroy thyroid cells.

The general recommendation is to **follow this diet for 1-2 weeks before radiation treatment**, as well as 1-2 days after radiation. Check with your medical provider to see how long you should follow the diet. The low iodine diet allows for **no more than 50 milligrams of iodine per day**. Most adults consume a minimum of 150 milligrams of iodine per day. This handout will help you lower the iodine in your diet to meet recommendations.

General guidelines





- Use non-iodized salt. No sea salt or iodized salt.
- Avoid seafood and other sea products, including fish, shellfish, seaweed, and kelp. Check food labels for sea-based ingredients like agar-agar, algin, alginates, carrageenan, or nori.
- Use egg whites and egg substitutes in place of whole eggs or egg yolks. Do not eat any food made with whole eggs.
- Avoid all dairy products (milk, cream, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, etc.).
- Limit fresh meats to 6 ounces per day. Eat no more than 4 servings of grains per day.
- Red Dye #3 is high in iodine. Check for this ingredient on food labels before eating. Talk with a doctor or pharmacist to see if any of your medications have Red Dye #3.
- Limit processed or pre-packaged foods—some may be prepared with iodized salt. Eating fresh, less-processed foods will make this diet easier.
- Do not eat food prepared by restaurants—it is difficult to know the amount of iodine in the food.
- Stop taking multivitamins or other supplements that contain iodine. Avoid herbal supplements.
- Avoid soy or soy-based products, including tofu, edamame, soy milk, and Texturized Vegetable Protein (TVP).
- Chocolate can be high in iodine because it contains milk—use cocoa powders instead.
- Prepare baked goods like breads, muffins, and rolls at home with low-iodine ingredients. Commercially baked goods may be prepared with iodine-containing ingredients, including iodine dough conditioners. Check the label carefully before eating.
- Some health professionals recommend limiting or avoiding certain beans, blackstrap or sulfured molasses, rhubarb, and potato skins (not the flesh). However, this is not consistent across all recommendations.

Dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

Facility: _____

FOOD GROUP	FOODS RECOMMENDED	FOODS TO AVOID
<p>Milk and milk products</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream (including soy milk)
<p>Breads and Grains</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All whole grain or enriched breads, cereals, or grains made without iodine-containing ingredients • Homemade breads and cereals • Limit to 4 servings per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads, cereals, or grains made with iodine-containing dough conditioners or other ingredients • Matzo crackers • Read labels carefully
<p>Fruits</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any fruit or fruits juices except those listed as not allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maraschino cherries • Fruit cocktail • Rhubarb (see "General Guidelines")
<p>Vegetables</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fresh or cooked-from-fresh vegetables • Frozen vegetables without salt • Flesh of potato (see General Guidelines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned vegetables • Frozen vegetables preserved w/ salt • Potato skins (See General Guidelines)
<p>Meat and Meat Substitutes</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 6 ounces per day of fresh beef, lamb, pork, veal, game and poultry • Egg whites or egg substitutes • Unsalted nuts and nut butters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish or shellfish • Soybeans and other soy products (tofu, edamame) • Eggs • Some beans (lima, navy, pinto, red kidney, cowpeas)-See "General Guidelines"

FOOD GROUP	FOODS RECOMMENDED	FOODS TO AVOID
<p>Fats</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables oils • Unsalted margarine • Salad dressings without iodine-containing ingredients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter, salted or unsalted • Salted margarine • Salad dressings with iodine-containing ingredients
<p>Beverages</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Soda and sweetened beverages not made with Red Dye #3 • Non-instant coffee and tea • Beer, wine, other alcohol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Beverages made with Red Dye #3
<p>Sweets and Desserts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sweets and desserts except those not allowed • Sweeteners including sugar, jelly, honey, and maple syrup • Unsulfured molasses • Cocoa powder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweets or dessert prepared with milk or dairy ingredients (ice cream), eggs, or iodized salt • Commercial baked goods prepared with iodine-containing ingredients • Blackstrap or sulfured molasses • Most chocolate (made with milk)
<p>Miscellaneous</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh or dried spices and herbs • Black pepper • Vinegar • Soy lecithin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seaweed, kelp, agar-agar, algin, alginates, carrageenan, nori • Foods containing Red Dye #3 • Soy sauce • Medications, multivitamins, or supplements containing iodine

Meal Ideas

*Limit breads, grains and cereals to less than 4 servings per day; no more than 6 ounces of meat per day.

*See the online Low Iodine Cookbook provided by Thyroid Cancer Survivors Association, Inc. for more recipes!

Breakfast

- Oatmeal with honey, dried fruit, nuts, or cinnamon
- Egg-white omelet with fresh vegetables and a glass of fruit juice
- 1 slice of toast made from homemade wheat bread with peanut butter

Lunch

- Salad: lettuce or other greens, grilled meat, fruits and vegetables; dress with oil and vinegar
- Grilled chicken sandwich on homemade bread
- Vegetable soup (with no restricted ingredients) and Matzo crackers

Dinner

- Grilled pork tenderloin with steamed vegetables and fresh fruit salad
- Tacos or fajitas: chicken or ground beef, onions, bell peppers wrapped in corn tortilla (avoid spice mixes)
- Grilled kabobs: steak, assorted vegetables, pineapple, and mango

Snacks

- Unsalted nuts or nut butters
- Fresh or dried fruits, fruit juice, or applesauce
- Fresh vegetables
- Unsalted popcorn
- Matzo or other unsalted crackers

Resources:

American Thyroid Association. Low Iodine Diet. <http://www.thyroid.org/low-iodine-diet/>

Thyroid Cancer Survivors Association, Inc. Low Iodine Diet. <http://www.thyca.org/pap-fol/lowiodinediet/#details>

Low Iodine Cookbook provided by the Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association: <http://www.thyca.org/download/document/231/Cookbook.pdf>



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This handout is intended for use during an appointment with a registered dietitian only, and is not meant for use by other clinicians.

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