

Low Iodine Diet

A diet low in iodine will help prepare the body for radioactive iodine treatment.

What does a low iodine diet do?

The purpose of a low iodine diet is to use-up the iodine stored in the body. This makes a radioactive iodine treatment more effective. After following a low iodine diet for 2 weeks (14 days), a person's remaining thyroid tissue and tumor will want iodine. This makes the tissue and tumor soak up radioactive iodine more easily during the treatment scan.

What is a low iodine diet?

- A diet that limits total iodine intake to 50 micrograms per day for 2 weeks.
 - This diet requires that you only eat foods that are allowed and avoid foods that are not allowed from the list of "Guidelines to follow for a low iodine diet" below.
 - You do not need to count the micrograms of iodine in your meals. If you follow the guidelines below, your iodine intake will be less than 50 micrograms per day.
 - You will need to avoid most processed or packaged foods, red food dyes, and eating out while on a low iodine diet.
 - It is not a low salt or no-sodium diet.
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Guidelines to follow for a low iodine diet

Food group

Foods allowed

Foods not allowed

Dairy

- Use homemade nut milk made with unsalted nuts and water only or coconut milk (expressed from coconut meat without any other additives) as a substitute
 - Any cow, goat, or sheep milk products
 - Ice cream
 - Cheese
 - Pudding
 - Milk (including skim and evaporated)
 - Yogurt
 - Sour cream
 - Whipped cream
 - Eggnog
 - Salted nut milk
 - Buttermilk
 - Evaporated milk
 - Sweetened condensed milk
 - Processed cheese (American, Velveeta)
 - Nacho cheese mix
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To Learn More

- Nutrition
206-987-4758
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Low Iodine Diet

Protein (eggs, seafood, poultry and meat)

- Two 3 oz. servings per day of fresh poultry and meat (like chicken, turkey, pork, lamb, veal, or beef)
- Egg whites
- Egg substitutes made only from egg whites
- Black beans and garbanzo beans (chickpeas) made from dried beans only
- Lentils
- All cured meats, deli meats, bacon, ham, sausage, frankfurters, or liver
- Whole eggs, egg yolks and substitutes from egg yolk
- All seafood, fresh and canned
- All shellfish including lobster, crab, shrimp, oysters, or imitation crab
- Fish pastes and sauces
- Red kidney beans, lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans, and cowpeas (also called black-eyed peas)

Bread and cereals

- Pasta (white and wheat with no salt or eggs)
- Bulgur
- Wheat
- Rice (specifically basmati)
- Oats
- Couscous
- Quinoa, cornmeal, oatmeal
- Cream of wheat
- Corn flakes and wheat flakes
- Matzos
- Cooked cereals without added salt
- Breads that do not have “iodate” conditioner as an ingredient
- Homemade bread with allowed ingredients
- Any bread with “calcium iodate” or “potassium iodate” listed in its ingredients
- Egg noodles, packaged rice and pasta mixes
- Instant or packaged oatmeal, rice dishes and noodles
- Saltine crackers

Fruits

- All fresh and frozen fruits and fruit juices
- Most canned fruits preferably in juice
- Maraschino cherries
- Fruit cocktail
- Rhubarb
- Canned fruit juices

Vegetables

- Fresh vegetables
- Frozen vegetables
- Canned vegetables with no added salt
- Potato (no skin)
- Nori (like the black paper in sushi rolls)
- Seaweed, sea vegetables like kelp, carrageenan, algin and algae
- Spinach
- Vegetables with sauces
- Vegetables canned in brine
- Pickles
- Sauerkraut
- Cans or jars of tomato or pasta sauce
- Soy products (tofu, soy milk, soy sauce, soy beans)
- Potato skins

Low Iodine Diet

Nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsalted and unprocessed nuts and seeds• Unsalted nut butter, commercial or homemade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roasted or salted nuts made with salt containing iodine• Trail mixes or granola bars with chocolate pieces, M&Ms, or yogurt-covered pieces• Regular nut butters
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oil, vegetable shortening• Oil and vinegar dressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Butter• Margarine
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black coffee, tea• Sprite, 7UP• Water• Homemade lemonade without iodized salt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cocoa mix, Kool-Aid• All other sodas, lemonade or iced tea mixes, all powdered drink mixes• Beer• Mineral water containing sodium
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homemade cakes, cookies and fruit desserts made with allowed ingredients (use recipes from the <i>Low-Iodine Cookbook</i>)• Homemade popsicles from fruit juices• All baked goods must be made with egg whites only and should be dairy-free	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chocolate, products with chocolate, puddings, custards, hot chocolate• Foods made with not allowed ingredients including muffins, cornbread, banana bread, zucchini bread, pastries, pancakes, cakes, cookies, donuts• Sugary candies, fruit ice, popsicles and Jell-O that may have red dye
Other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homemade gravy without milk, butter, or iodized salt• Non-creamy salad dressings• Herbs and spices both fresh and dried• Home-popped popcorn without butter or iodized salt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diet or meal replacement or protein shakes (most contain dairy or soy ingredients) such as Ensure or Carnation Instant Breakfast• Meat tenderizers, ketchup, mustard, onion or garlic salt• Canned soups, bouillon cubes• Commercial salad dressings, mayonnaise• Salted snack or potato chips• Red Jell-O• Molasses• Multivitamins with iodine• Red, orange and brown processed foods (including candies), pills and capsules

Can I eat out?

It is hard to see the ingredients and the kind of salt restaurants use in making their meals. Avoid eating out while on the low iodine diet.

Tips for following a low iodine diet

- This diet is very low in calcium. You may want to take a calcium supplement. We recommend a supplement that has 1000 to 1200 mg of calcium per day. Check with your healthcare provider and dietitian before taking a calcium supplement.
 - Iodine is used as a stabilizer in food processing and is in red food dyes (also known as erythrosine). Read labels to find foods that contain red food dye and avoid those foods.
 - Many salt mixes contain iodine. Avoid iodized salt or sea salt and commercially prepared foods with salt. Purchase non-iodized salt such as Kroger brand non-iodized salt or pickling salt for your food.
 - Put the guidelines on your refrigerator to help you remember what foods are allowed.
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Resources

The *Low-iodine Cookbook* includes more than 340 delicious recipes free from the Thyroid Cancer Survivors Association at www.thyca.org.