

Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet

What is graft versus host disease (GVHD)?

Graft versus host disease (GVHD) can happen after a child has a blood stem cell transplant from another person. The cells from the person who donated (the graft) can attack the skin, stomach or liver of the child who gets the stem cells (the host)

What do I need to do?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about treatment choices.

- It may be helpful to give your child foods that are easy on their stomach. This can help to control some of your child's symptoms of stomach GVHD. These symptoms include:
 - Diarrhea
 - Stomach pain
 - Mouth sores
 - Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Your child should have 2 days without symptoms getting worse. Then your child can move to the next diet stage.
- Only move to the next diet stage when your child's care team tells you to.

What does the diet include?

The diet includes foods that are soft and bland. To help improve diarrhea and stomach upset, they are also:

- **Low in lactose (milk sugar):**
 - Low lactose milk
 - Soy and rice milk
 - Cheese
- **Low in fiber:**
 - White breads
 - Dinner rolls
 - Corn flakes
 - Rice Krispies
- **Low in sugar:**
 - Sugar-free drinks
 - Graham crackers
 - Animal crackers
- **Low in fat foods** that are:
 - Baked
 - Boiled
 - Steamed

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

STAGE 1

Start with these foods

Food group	Foods allowed
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Half caffeine-free tea (1 part tea and 1 part water)• Low sugar sports drinks like Gatorade or Powerade• Sugar free Kool-Aid• Crystal Light• Low lactose milk, rice milk and soy milk
Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cream of wheat• Instant plain grits• Puffed rice• Rice Krispies• Corn flakes• Plain Cheerios
Carbohydrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• White bread• Plain bagels• Plain English muffins• White dinner rolls• Plain pasta like macaroni, egg noodles or spaghetti• White potatoes boiled, mashed or baked without skin• White rice• Saltines• Soda crackers• Pretzels
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broth• Sugar-free popsicles• Butter or margarine on breads, pasta, rice or crackers

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Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

STAGE 2

Add these foods to your child's diet when your child's care team tells you to

Food group	Foods allowed
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well-cooked chicken or turkey breast• Lean ham• Eggs• Fish• Water-packed tuna• Nutritional drinks like Pediasure, Kid Essentials, Resource Breeze, Boost or Ensure
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsweetened apple sauce• Bananas• Canned peaches• Pears in juice
Vegetables	Canned or well-cooked: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green beans• Carrots• Sweet potatoes without skin
Dessert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Animal crackers• Graham crackers• Vanilla wafers• Plain angel food cake
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mayonnaise• Soups made with broth• Sandwiches made from foods listed above

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Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

STAGE 3

Add these foods to your child's diet when your child's care team tells you to

This list is called a transitional diet. It is close to a bone marrow transplant (BMT) diet.

Food group	Foods allowed
Milk and non-dairy choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low-lactose, lactose-free or dairy free milk• Soy milk• Rice milk• Lactose-free or dairy free nutritional drinks like Pediasure, Kid Essentials, Boost or Ensure• Cheese <p>If your child drinks regular milk, yogurt or sugar-free pudding they should take Lactaid pills.</p>
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well-cooked meat and low fat meat• Well-cooked chicken and turkey without the skin• Ham• Eggs• Tofu• Low-fat hot dogs• Turkey bacon• Fish and other seafood• Canned fish or meat• Packaged lunch meats that were cooked to be steaming hot
Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instant oatmeal• Instant grits• Cold cereals with less than 2 percent (2%) fiber
Carbohydrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plain white breads like dinner rolls, pita, flour tortillas, cornbread, bagels, sour dough breads and English muffins• Pancakes and waffles• Crackers like animal, graham and saltines• Rice cakes• Pretzels• Baked potato chips• White rice

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Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed
Carbohydrates (Continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain pasta • White flour • Cornstarch
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half strength juices (1 part juice and 1 part water), • Bananas • Unsweetened applesauce • Canned fruits like peaches and pears in juice
Vegetables	Canned or well-cooked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrots • Green beans • Mushrooms • Asparagus tips • White and sweet potatoes without skin • Baby foods
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soups made with broth • Ramen noodle soups without flavor packet • Homemade cream soups made with low lactose milk
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low sugar sports drinks like Gatorade or Powerade • Sugar free Kool-Aid • Half strength cranberry drinks (1 part drink and 1 part water) • Low sugar drinks • Water • Store bought weak caffeine-free tea • Caffeine-free diet soda like Diet Ginger Ale, Diet 7-Up or Sprite Zero
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain cookies like vanilla wafers, animal crackers, graham crackers and gingersnaps • Sugar-free popsicles • Sugar-free Pudding made with low lactose or dairy free milk • Angel food cake • Sugar-free Jell-O or gelatin • Plain cake without frosting
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter • Margarine • Mayonnaise

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Graft versus host disease (GVHD) diet, continued

Food group	Foods allowed
Fats (Continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gravy• Sauce made with low lactose or dairy free milk• Sour cream• Dairy free creamer

What else do I need to know?

Your child will go to the next stage diet when their symptoms are better. Their care team will tell you when to go to the next stage. Each child's GVHD treatment length is different.

- Start with 1 food choice.
- Add 1 food item at a time.
- Watch how your child does with each new food.
- Stop the new food if diarrhea, stomach pain, nausea or vomiting gets worse.
- Have your child eat only a small amount to start and slowly give them more.
- Have your child eat small meals every 2 to 3 hours.
- Make sandwiches, soups and meals from foods on the list.
- Use caffeine-free sodas and weak caffeine-free teas.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor or nutritionist if you have any questions about your child's diet.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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