

Microscopic Colitis

Guidelines for Food Choices



Please bear in mind that except for certain foods that are almost always a problem in most cases, many of the possible food sensitivities for microscopic colitis patients tend to vary from case to case. Because of that, it is impossible to develop a list of foods that is absolutely safe for everyone. Either stool testing for antibodies to certain foods, or an exclusion diet that consists of foods found to be safe for most MC patients, can be used as a starting point for designing a recovery diet. Typically, this diet will need to be fine tuned from time to time, as needed.

Virtually everyone who has MC and who has chronic symptoms is sensitive to gluten, despite the fact that the classic celiac blood tests used by physicians will not detect the type of non-celiac gluten sensitivity typically present with MC. This occurs because research shows that when the genes that predispose to microscopic colitis are triggered, the genes that predispose to gluten sensitivity (but not necessarily celiac disease) are also triggered. This causes increased intestinal permeability (leaky gut) and opens the door to additional food sensitivities. In addition, the majority of patients are also sensitive to casein (the primary protein in all dairy products). Many are also sensitive to soy (including most of its relatives in the legume family), and almost half of the MC patients who have chronic symptoms are sensitive to eggs (the albumen or egg white). Some also have sensitivities to various other foods, such as beef, chicken, pork, or other foods.

Note that virtually everyone who has chronic MC tends to be intolerant of all artificial sweeteners. It is almost always necessary to minimize fiber and sugar in the recovery diet because of the fact that the digestive system

is unable to produce normal amounts of many enzymes when it is inflamed. Fiber must be minimized because it is extremely abrasive to intestines that are already extremely inflamed. Too much fiber irritates the delicate mucosal lining of the intestines and that can perpetuate the inflammation and prevent remission, despite following an otherwise safe diet.

So to offer some guidelines on foods that are typically safe for most people diagnosed with MC (though not necessarily safe for everyone), here are some foods that many patients have found to be safe:

Less common or "wild" types of meat are typically safe, including lamb (mutton), goat (cabrito), turkey, duck, goose, pheasant, quail, rabbit, venison, antelope, and others. That doesn't mean that the animals actually have to be wild, they just need to have the same basic genetics as their wild counterparts. Farm or ranch-raised animals of these species tend to work just as well as animals that are actually wild.

Bison meat is not safe for patients who happen to be sensitive to beef, because over the last century and a half, bison have occasionally been cross-bred with domestic cattle so that almost all of them now carry DNA from domestic cattle. Some patients can tolerate chicken, provided that it is not "injected" chicken (chicken injected with a "tenderizing" or "moisturizing" solution). Beware of "injected" turkey, pork, or beef, also, if you should choose to buy any of those meats. In general, food sourced from Farmer's Markets tends to be safer than similar foods that have been commercially-processed.

Most MC patients (though not all) can tolerate potatoes, and all but a few can tolerate sweet potatoes. Most can tolerate peeled (to reduce the fiber content), overcooked (to make them easier to digest), squash, carrots, green beans, broccoli, and similar vegetables. It's imperative to avoid all raw vegetables and fruit, with the exception of banana. Most people who have MC can tolerate banana, though many have to limit the amount to 1 per day, in order to avoid exceeding their personal overall fiber tolerance limit. Fruit is best avoided, or at least strictly limited until after remission is achieved, because

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not only is fruit a significant source of fiber, but inflamed intestines are typically unable to properly digest normal amounts of fructose, the primary sugar in most fruit. Iceberg lettuce seems to be absolutely the most irritating vegetable for inflamed intestines, so lettuce and also parsley and cilantro, for example, should be avoided during the recovery period. Spicy seasonings should also be avoided while recovering. Most condiments, dressings, sauces, etc., contain ingredients that cause problems for most MC patients. Anyone who feels that they cannot live without them, should make their own, using a minimal number of safe ingredients.

In general, recovery is faster and easier (and much less likely to fail) if the diet is kept simple and bland. After stable remission has been in place for a while, it should be safe to experiment with reintroducing a few foods (one at a time) to see if they can be tolerated. It usually works best to eat a small amount of a test food the first day, and increase the amount somewhat on subsequent days. If no reaction to the food occurs by the end of the third day, then the food should be safe to add back into the diet.

Please be aware that there are a few brands of reasonably good gluten-free (GF) bread on the market these days, but most of them contain other ingredients that many MC patients cannot tolerate. Because of that, home-made bread is typically much better tolerated than commercially-processed breads. Rice cakes or rice tortillas are typically safe, and corn tortillas are usually safe (look for a GF label), provided that corn is not one of the foods that must be avoided because of individual sensitivity. Corn sensitivity is not common, but it's not rare, either. Patients who have been in remission for a substantial period of time are much more likely to be able to tolerate items such as commercially-processed GF bread, or mixes for bread or other baked goods.

As digestive system healing progresses, experience enables most MC patients to learn to interpret what their body is trying to tell them, and this ability to "read the signs" allows fine tuning of the diet, to ensure that progress toward remission will be optimized. Hopefully, some of this is helpful, and it provides enough information such that most people who choose to control

their colitis symptoms by diet changes, with or without medications, will be able to shop wisely for the food needed to heal their digestive system. Much more information and recipes are available on the Microscopic Colitis Discussion and Support Board at this link:

<http://www.perskyfarms.com/phpBB2/index.php>.

Several hundred tasty recipes developed by a professional chef who has MC can be found at the following link. These recipes (the ones posted by Dee) are free of gluten, dairy, and soy. Additional recipes have been posted by others who have differing food sensitivities, so be sure to consider the ingredients, to make sure that they are safe you.

<http://www.perskyfarms.com/phpBB2/viewforum.php?f=7>

To learn more about treating microscopic colitis by diet changes, see:

<http://www.microscopiccolitisfoundation.org/using-diet-changes.html>

The information contained in this fact sheet is provided by the **Microscopic Colitis Foundation**. Additional information about all aspects of the disease can be found online at:

<http://www.microscopiccolitisfoundation.org/>

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