

FOODS FOR THE GERSON DIET

“Let food be your medicine, and medicine be your food.”

The two most important aspects of the Gerson approach to healing are freshness and purity. All of the foods ingested on the Gerson Therapy must be fresh, organically or biologically grown, and consumed in their most natural form.

We strongly recommend that the patient does not add to or change the dietary guidelines without the advice of a certified Gerson Therapy practitioner. While many patients have used appropriate, compatible additions or adjuncts to the diet that have helped their healing process, there are many others who have failed to heal because they made too many “minor modifications” to the Gerson Therapy protocol.

The Gerson Therapy has been shown to be successful in achieving remission and cure in many different diseases when used as directed; modifications may or may not affect the outcome of your particular condition, but significant alteration without medical advice from someone knowledgeable about the biochemical basis of the Gerson approach may reduce one’s chances for recovery.

DESIRABLE FOODS

- Apples
- Apricots
- Artichoke
- Arugula
- Asparagus
- Beets and tops
- Broccoli
- Brown sugar
- Cabbage, red & leaves (smaller quantities – gas producing)
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery Knob or stalks
- Chards, all kinds
- Cherries
- Chicory
- Chives
- Cilantro
- Corn (ONLY if allowed by physician)
- Currants
- Eggplant
- Endives
- Escarole
- Flax oil (organic, not high lignan)
- Fruit dried unsulphured as raisins, peaches, dates, figs, apricots and prunes (stewed or pre-soaked only)

- Fruits fresh (except all berries and pineapple)
- Garlic
- Grapefruit*
- Grapes
- Green beans
- Honey
- Horseradish (grated, not bottled)
- Juices, freshly pressed, as prescribed
- Kale
- Leeks
- Lemons*
- Lettuce
- Mangoes
- Melons
- Oatmeal
- Onions
- Oranges*
- Parsley and parsley root
- Peaches
- Pears
- Pepper, green and red Bell pepper
- Plums
- Potatoes
- Radishes (not the leaves)
- Raw fruit
- Rhubarb
- Rice brown (if allowed)
- Romaine
- Rye bread (unsalted, non-fat)
- Spices and Herbs (small amounts only): allspice, anise, bay leaves, coriander, dill, fennel, mace, marjoram, rosemary, sage, saffron, tarragon, thyme, sorrel, summer savory.
- Spinach (cooked only)
- Squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Swiss chard
- Tangerines
- Tomatoes
- Vegetables (except mushrooms, leaves of: carrots, radishes, spinach and mustard green)
- Vinegar (wine or cider)
- Watercress
- Yams
- Yogurt, non-fat, organic Horizon, Brown Cow, 7 Stars (after the sixth week of the Gerson Therapy or as allowed by the physician)
- Zucchini

* Patients with collagen related illnesses must avoid citrus juices and fruits. For all others, citrus juice is optional. Only one citrus juice a day is allowed and may be replaced for a carrot and apple juice.

OCCASIONALLY ALLOWED FOODS

- Breads made from whole rye – 1-2 slices a day (if all of the foods are eaten first)
- Sweeteners: maple syrup (grade B) or honey or unrefined blackstrap molasses may be used at 1-2 teaspoons a day maximum.
- Brown or wild rice – once a week
- Yams and sweet potatoes – once a week
- Banana – ½ a week
- Organic popcorn – a holiday treat only

PROHIBITED FOODS

- Alcohol
- Animal fats
- Avocados
- Baking soda
- Berries
- Bicarbonate of soda in food, toothpaste or gargle
- Black tea and other non-herbal teas
- Bottled
- Butter
- Cake
- Candy
- Canned
- Cheese
- Chocolate
- Cocoa
- Coconuts
- Coffee as a regular beverage
- Commercial beverages
- Cream
- Cream and other dairy fats
- Cucumbers
- Epsom salts, sodium-based baking powders, and anything with “sodium” in its name
- Fluorine in toothpaste
- Frozen foods
- Hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils’
- Ice cream
- Legume-based food products
- Manufactured (processed) foods
- Margarine or oil based spreads
- Meats
- Mushrooms
- Mustard
- Nut butters and any other source of dietary fats
- Nuts and seeds
- Oils and fats, and any foods that contain them
- Olean, Olestra or other “fat substitutes”
- Pineapples
- Preserved; refined, salted, smoked, and sulfured foods
- Protein powders or supplements, including barley or algae based powders
- Proteins and high-protein foods
- Salt, table salt, sea salt, celery salt, vegetable salt, Bragg Aminos, tamari, soy sauce, “lite salt” or salt substitutes
- Seafood, and other animals
- Soy and soy products
- Spices, pepper, paprika, basil and oregano
- Spinach (raw) (allowed cooked only)
- Sprouted alfalfa and other bean or seed sprouts
- This includes corn oil, olive oil, canola oil, vegetable oil except flaxseed oil, as specifically prescribed
- White flour
- White sugar

The following is an explanation on some of the foods on the Prohibited List.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is prohibited because it limits the blood's ability to carry oxygen, places additional strain on the liver to detoxify and remove it from the body; and is, in general, toxic.

AVOCADOS

Avocados are too high in fats.

BAKING POWDER AND BAKING SODA

Almost all baking powders contain alum (aluminum), which is believed to be toxic. Those that are aluminum-free and also sodium-free may occasionally be used with the consent of your doctor. (Featherweight is a potassium-based powder that may be used occasionally.)

BEEF, PORK, POULTRY, EGGS, FISH, SEAFOOD, AND ALL OTHER MEAT OR ANIMAL FLESH PRODUCTS

These are high in protein, difficult to digest, often high in fat, and make additional work for the liver and excretory systems.

BLACK TEA AND OTHER NON-HERBAL OR CAFFEINE-CONTAINING TEAS

Black tea and other non-herbal teas are prohibited because they contain caffeine, which is undesirable when introduced by mouth, and because they often contain undesirable aromatic acids (see discussion under Berries below).

COFFEE AND COFFEE SUBSTITUTES BY MOUTH

Coffee and coffee substitutes by mouth, both with and without caffeine. Taken by mouth, coffee effects undesirable stimulation of the digestive system, and the caffeine acts as an undesirable stimulant to the central nervous system. Coffee is also virtually devoid of nutrients. However, when taken rectally, it has an entirely different, and desirable effect on the body.

CANDY, CAKE, MUFFINS, PASTRIES AND OTHER REFINED SWEETS

Candy, cakes, muffins, pastries, and other refined sweets are prohibited because they almost always contain one or more prohibited ingredients, such as fats, oils, refined sugars or flours, salt, soda, baking powder, or dairy products.

Note that some breads and pastries can be made using permitted ingredients; these can help to make the diet more interesting, but should not be consumed on a regular basis (i.e., only on special occasions).

COMMERCIAL BEVERAGES, JUICES, SODAS OF ALL TYPES

Commercial beverages, juices, sodas of all types almost always have refined sugars, carbonation, or other undesirable additives, and are all but devoid of essential nutrients. In addition, consumption of these beverages reduces capacity for desirable fresh, organic foods and juices.

CUCUMBERS

Cucumbers, in combination with the juices, are difficult to digest and are high in sodium.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

All milk and milk products (including goat's milk), such as cheese, cream, ice cream, ice milk, butter or buttermilk, except as specifically allowed under proteins. Dairy products are generally extremely high in fat; an 8 oz serving of 2% milk contains more fat than two strips of bacon! Cheeses can be as much as 65% fat, and are usually very high in sodium. Even "fat free" cheeses usually have undesirable additives, and are high in sodium. Buttermilk is prohibited because the commercial buttermilk now available is "cultured", rather than churned, and is high in fat and sodium. The exception is plain, organic, non-fat yogurt after 6-8 weeks.

DRIED BEANS AND LEGUMES

Lentils are introduced if patient is doing well at about 6 months at once every 2 weeks. Soak overnight and sprout for one day before cooking.

DRINKING WATER

Contrary to the commonly heard recommendation to "drink 8 glasses of water a day", Gerson strongly believed that a Gerson patient should not drink water, so as to avoid diluting the stomach acid, and to allow maximum capacity for nutrition from fresh foods

and juices. If the patient is taking less than 13 juices, he/she may need to augment with detox tea or other fluid.

GENERAL PROHIBITIONS

All manufactured (processed) foods: bottled, canned, frozen, preserved, refined, salted, smoked, and sulfured.

HOT PEPPERS

Hot peppers (jalapeños, etc.) contain the same strong aromatics found in prohibited spices. These may inhibit healing responses and should be avoided. Green, yellow, and sweet red peppers may be used without limitation.

MUSHROOMS

Standard white mushrooms are not a vegetable, but a fungus. They are difficult to digest, and provide little nutrition.

NUTS AND SEEDS

Nuts and seeds, including almonds, apricot kernels, sunflower seeds, flax seeds, peanuts, cashews, and all other nuts and seeds, are prohibited because they are high in protein, generally high in fat, often salted, difficult to digest and abundant in enzyme inhibitors.

OILS AND FATS

Oils and fats, and any foods that contain them are not allowed. This includes corn oils, olive oils, canola oils, and all other vegetable oils except flax-seed oil as specifically prescribed; butter, cheese, cream and other dairy fats; all animal fats; all margarines or oil-based spreads; coconuts and avocado; all hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils; Olean, Olestra or other “fat substitutes”; nut butters; and any other source of dietary fats, except as naturally occurring in allowed foods.

With the exception of fresh raw flax seed oil, no oils or fats of any kind are permitted.

PINEAPPLES AND BERRIES

Max Gerson found that a number of his patients were experiencing allergic reactions, apparently to the aromatic acids present in pineapple and berries. Dr. Gerson felt that the aromatics interfere with healing. For this reason, pineapples and berries are prohibited.

PROTEINS AND HIGH-PROTEIN FOODS

Proteins and high-protein foods, such as meats, seafood, and other animal proteins; nuts and seeds; soy or other legume-based food products; all protein powders or supplements, including barley or spirulina and chlorella, unless specifically used when prescribed for protein supplementation.

Outside of these categories, there are other foods that must be “off-limits” until the patient is completely healed, and in some cases, even after full recovery. Almost all packaged, prepared (“convenience”) foods (frozen, bottled, or boxed) must be forsaken for health reasons. Restaurant food will almost always be unacceptable, both because it is rarely organic, and almost always cooked with added salt, fats, and other additives inappropriate for the Gerson diet.

Patients new to the Gerson Therapy often comment that Gerson’s list of prohibited foods is much longer and more restrictive than other “natural” or “holistic” approaches to healing and wellness. The Gerson approach looks at everything that goes into, or on, the body as important to the healing process. It is through this attention to detail that we are able to accomplish healing even in some extremely advanced cases, or in diseases that are otherwise not curable.

We have, whenever possible endeavored to provide a brief explanation why the various foods are not allowed on the diet.

SALT AND SODIUM

Salt and sodium in all forms, including table salt, sea salt, celery salt, vegetable salt, Bragg Aminos, tamari, soy sauce, “lite salt”, baking soda, Epsom salts, sodium-based baking powders, and anything with “sodium” in its name, as well as salt substitutes.

SPICES

Spices (black pepper, paprika, basil, oregano, and others not specifically permitted) are prohibited because of their high content of aromatic acids.

SOY BEANS AND PRODUCTS

Soy beans and products, including tofu, tempeh, miso, tamari, and other soy sauces, Bragg’s Aminos, textured vegetable protein, soy milk, and all other soy-based products. These are prohibited for a variety of different reasons including high fat, sodium and/or protein content, and the presence of toxic inhibitors to nutrient absorption.

SPROUTED ALFALFA AND OTHER BEAN OR SEED SPROUTS

Alfalfa sprouts have been found to be high in l-canavanine, an immature amino acid that can cause immune suppression. Patients without a prior history who have used sprouts in juices have reported sudden onset of arthritic-like joint pains and other undesirable side effects. This has only been studied in alfalfa; we do not know if this effect applies to other sprouts, but we recommend caution. Before adding sprouts to your diet, discuss it with an experienced Gerson practitioner.

OTHER PROHIBITED ITEMS

Fluoride in water, toothpaste, gargle, hair dyes, permanents, cosmetic, underarm deodorants, lipstick, lotions.