

# Low Iodine Diet

## What is a Low Iodine Diet?

**Iodine** is a component of thyroid hormones, and is found in most foods as well as some beverages, food additives, and medications.

Your doctor will ask you to follow a low iodine diet for a period of time if you require radioactive scans or treatment. It is important for you to avoid iodine in your diet to help lower the amount of iodine in your body. This will make the imaging and treatment of your thyroid more effective.

You should plan to follow this diet for the 2 weeks (14 days) before your radioactive scan or treatment is scheduled. This time frame may vary according to the individual patient: please check with your doctor for your individual plan and the time you should stay on this diet.

## Important Points

- **This is a low iodine diet – not a low sodium diet.** Sodium is allowed as long as it is not iodized sodium, iodized salt or sea salt.
- **You should aim to consume a total of 50mcg iodine or less per day.** This means foods and beverages containing less than 20mcg iodine are allowed.
- **Nothing from the ocean or the sea** is allowed while you are on this diet. (No fish, shellfish, sushi, seaweed, carrageenan, alginate, agar-agar, nori, or other sea-based foods or ingredients).
- **No processed meats** (luncheon/deli meats, sausages, hot dogs).
- **Fresh meats only** such as poultry, beef or pork (**avoid any meats injected with broth, and any cured or corned foods** such as ham, lox, or sauerkraut). Get fresh meat from a butcher if possible.
- **No egg yolks or whole eggs.** Egg whites or Egg Beaters are okay. **No mayonnaise** (made with eggs). No foods containing whole eggs.
- **Limit dairy. Milk – limit to 4 ounces (1/2 cup) per day.** No other dairy products, including yogurt, cheese, ice cream, or butter.
- **No commercially made bread or bakery products.** Homemade bread or baked goods without iodine ingredients is allowed. (A bread machine may make this easier – purchase one or borrow one if you can.)
- **No red food dye #3:** read ingredients on food labels carefully. (Found in red or brown beverages, desserts, candies, colas etc.)
- **No chocolate (due to milk ingredient):** cocoa powder and some dark chocolates are allowed.

- No maraschino cherries.
- No soybeans or soy products.
- No instant coffees or instant teas.
- No salted nuts or salty snack foods (unsalted nuts or unsalted popcorn are allowed).
- No vitamins, multivitamins or vitamin-containing supplements (usually contains iodine) – review your medications, including herbals, with your doctor to assure they do not contain iodine.
- **Read ingredients on labels and avoid the following:**
  - Iodine
  - Iodate
  - Iodide
  - Carrageenan
  - Agar-agar
  - Algae
  - Algin
  - Alginate
  - Blackstrap molasses
  - Carrageenan
  - Egg yolk or whole egg
  - Kelp
  - Nori
  - Red dye #3
  - Seaweed
  - Soy

## Preparing meals

You should plan on homemade meals, stocking low-iodine snacks for home as well as times away from home, and avoid dining out while on this diet. This is the most effective way to make sure you stay within the guidelines for iodine consumption while on this diet.

We recommend the free, downloadable [Low Iodine Cookbook](#) available on the Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc. website: visit [www.thyca.org](http://www.thyca.org)

It contains over 300 low-iodine recipes including breakfast foods, entrees, soups, and snacks.

## Low-Iodine Foods to Stock Up On

- Raw fruits and fruit juice
- Dried fruits
- Applesauce
- Raw vegetables or plain frozen vegetables without added ingredients
- Unsalted nuts
- Popcorn (air-popped/homemade without iodized salt)
- Unsalted nut butters (oily top – dry on bottom of jar)
- Unsalted crackers (like matzo crackers)

## Low-Iodine Meal or Snack Ideas

- Homemade bread or muffins with natural nut butters or jelly
- Oatmeal with honey, maple syrup, unsalted nuts, or dried fruits
- Salad with a protein source such as slices of grilled chicken or beef, unsalted nuts, or hardboiled egg white (no yolk!) with oil and vinegar dressing
- Unsalted crackers or carrot sticks with natural nut butters
- Raw vegetables
- Air-popped popcorn drizzled with flavored olive oil