GutTrack®

Free guide

The Flare-Day Food Guide

A gentle, practical guide to eating when your gut is having a rough time. Written by Ben Heath-Jung, a chef who has lived with Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis for 17 years.

Please read first
This guide is general information from lived experience. It is not medical advice and it is not a diet plan. Everyone with IBD reacts differently, so what is easy for one person can be a trigger for another. Please talk to your IBD team or an IBD dietitian before making big changes to what you eat, especially if you are losing weight or have had a stricture or surgery.

When to get help rather than read a guide

- Severe or worsening tummy pain, a swollen tummy or repeated vomiting.
- Blood in your stool that is heavy or new, or a high temperature.
- Signs of dehydration: very dark urine, dizziness, a racing heart, or you cannot keep fluids down.
- In any of these cases, contact your IBD nurse or consultant, call NHS 111, or call 999 in an emergency.

The idea in one minute

During a flare, the aim is simple: **small, soft, plain and regular**. Gut inflammation makes the bowel less able to cope with rough fibre, fat and strong flavours, so we make food as easy to digest as we can until things settle. This is a short-term approach to get through a flare, not how you eat for life.

- **Small and often.** Five or six small meals or snacks are usually easier than three big ones.
- **Soft and well cooked.** Peel, cook until very tender, and chop or mash.
- **Low in rough fibre.** Skins, seeds, husks and raw vegetables are the usual problem during a flare.
- **Plain.** Go easy on fat, spice and anything that you already know is a personal trigger.
- **Drink regularly.** Fluids matter as much as food on a bad day.

What many people find easier, and what often makes things worse

Often easier on a flare day	Often harder on a flare day
White rice, plain white pasta or rice noodles	Raw vegetables and salad
White bread or toast	Skins, seeds, nuts and popcorn
Potato, peeled and well cooked	Wholegrain bread, bran and brown rice
Carrot, peeled and cooked until very soft	Beans, lentils and other pulses
Eggs: scrambled softly, boiled or poached	Fried, greasy or very rich food
Plain chicken, turkey or white fish, steamed or baked	Spicy food
	Alcohol, and lots of caffeine
Ripe banana, smooth apple purée	Fizzy drinks
Clear, strained broths and soups	“Sugar-free” sweets and gum with sorbitol, xylitol or similar
Porridge oats, if you tolerate them	

These lists are a starting point, not rules. Your own log is the best guide: if a food on the “easier” list upsets you, trust that. If something on the “harder” list has always been fine for you, that is useful to know too.

Fluids

- Sip little and often through the day, rather than a lot at once.
- Water, diluted squash and weak tea are fine for many people. Go easy on strong coffee, alcohol and fizzy drinks.
- If you have a lot of diarrhoea, ask a pharmacist about oral rehydration sachets, which replace salts as well as water.
- Warm, strained broth counts as a fluid and a snack in one.

A gentle example day

Breakfast	Softly scrambled eggs on white toast, or rice porridge with mashed ripe banana
Mid-morning	Ripe banana, or a few plain rice cakes
Lunch	Strained chicken broth with rice noodles and very soft, peeled carrot
Afternoon	Plain white toast with a little butter, and a warm drink
Dinner	Steamed chicken or baked white fish with white rice or smooth peeled mashed potato
Evening	A small bowl of rice porridge or plain toast if you are hungry

Kitchen tricks from a chef

- **Get the flavour without the fibre.** Warm crushed garlic gently in oil for a few minutes without browning, then strain it out. You keep the flavour and leave the fibre behind.
- **Strain your stocks.** Simmer onion, leek or celery for flavour, then pass the stock through a fine sieve so only the liquid is left.
- **Purée, then sieve.** Blending breaks food down but does not remove rough fibre. A second pass through a sieve does.
- **Peel and cook it softer than you think.** Carrot, courgette and potato should be easy to squash with a spoon.

Food safety note: garlic or herbs infused in oil can grow harmful bacteria if kept at room temperature. Make small batches, keep them in the fridge, and use them within a week.

Coming out the other side

As symptoms settle, bring foods back **one at a time**, in small amounts, and give each one a day or two before adding the next. Make a note of what you ate and how you felt. This is how you build your own picture of what works for you, rather than relying on a generic list.

Want to see your own patterns?
The GutTrack® companion app is free, needs no account, and keeps your data on your phone. It lets you log meals and check-ins, shows how foods line up with rough days, and has a Flare Mode that shows just the essentials when you need them. Open it at **guttrack.co.uk**.

This guide is general information and is not a substitute for advice from your IBD team, GP or a registered dietitian. If you have questions about your own diet, please speak to them. © 2026 Ben Heath-Jung / GutTrack®. You are welcome to share this guide with others living with IBD, as long as it is shared whole and unchanged.