

Cooking for the Gerson Therapy

The cooking methods for Gerson meals are unusual. By some culinary standards, Gerson meals would be considered “overcooked.” Dr. Gerson strongly believed that therapeutic foods should be soft and easy to chew and digest. This allows the weakened digestive system to get the greatest amount of nutrition in the most manageable form from the food consumed—particularly minerals, proteins and carbohydrates. The soft cooked foods also help to provide a buffer for the considerable volume of raw juices ingested. Gerson patients are also encouraged to complement the cooked portion of their meals with raw salads and vegetables, and to snack on raw fruits and vegetables at any time during the day.

All food must be prepared fresh, from scratch. Never use canned, bottled, or frozen foods, as they are processed and lacking in nutrients, and do not contribute to—and may even inhibit—restoration of the body. Absolutely no salt, soy sauces, or other sources of sodium should be added to any dishes. All prepared foods or recipes containing salt must be eliminated from a Gerson patient’s diet. Salt, pepper, sugar and other spices dull the taste buds over time, and most people accustomed to the Standard American Diet (SAD) are dependent on salt and seasoning to make their foods taste good to their deadened taste buds. Most people making the shift to the Gerson diet initially find the diet bland and unappealing. However, it only takes a few days for your taste buds to re-adjust, and you will once again be able to appreciate the “true” flavor of simple, unadorned fruits and vegetables. Soon enough, you will find commercially prepared junk foods utterly unpalatable.

The patient should consume a variety of foods every day. Over the course of a given week, the patient should make an effort to include as many different kinds of fruits and vegetables as possible, as different foods contain different vitamin, mineral and phytochemical combinations that are important for healing.

Cooking methods

A patient on the Gerson Therapy receives the nutritional equivalent of fifteen pounds of fresh, raw produce in his daily consumption of 104 ounces of juice. This provides the patient with all of the necessary healing enzymes that are best derived from raw foods. The cooked food is intended for ease of digestion, to provide bulk, fiber and carbohydrates, to supplement mineral intake, and to serve as a buffer for the juices. Always try to include a wide variety of vegetables in meals, except those listed as prohibited.

Fruits and vegetables typically are cooked over low heat 180-200°F for 60-75 minutes. Vegetables can be cooked on their own, with about 1 tbsp. of distilled water or stock from the Hippocrates soup. A tight-fitting lid should always be used to help retain moisture in foods. Cook

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vegetables slowly on low heat -just below boiling- until well done. To prevent burning, you can place a metal heat diffuser (flame tamer) between the burner and pot to help distribute the heat evenly.

Dishes can also be baked in the oven for 45-60 minutes at 250-300°F. The heat in the oven is more even and burning is less likely. You may use either a gas or electric range, and convection ovens are fine, so long as the food is cooked slowly and evenly.

Cooked Foods

In the initial 6-12 weeks on the Gerson Therapy, potatoes, oatmeal and carrots are the primary source of protein. The protein molecule is less damaged due to the slow cooking of vegetables. This process shortens the long carbohydrate chains and makes digestion easier. Thus, vegetables generally taste sweeter in their cooked state. Cooking at low temperatures also ensures maximum breakdown of indigestible fibers, maintains the integrity of the enzymes as well as the conversion of starches to easily digestible sugars. In the early stages of the therapy, we encourage patients to eat large quantities of foods, and to cook them thoroughly. Since food is considered medicinal on the Gerson Therapy, any changes in the patient's diet or cooking technique should be discussed with his/her Gerson physician.

Helpful tips

- Onions, tomatoes and squash contain a lot of water, so they generally don't need any added liquid for cooking, and can also add flavor to the cooked foods. Celery is also good for flavoring.
- If a recipe calls for a little bit of water, *always* use distilled water.
- Beets and potatoes can be boiled whole (without peeling) in distilled water and peeled when done. The majority of a vegetable's nutrients are contained in and right underneath the skin, so they should always be cooked with the skin intact.
- Potatoes can also be baked, scalloped, mashed, made into potato salad, or prepared in a variety of different ways. The potato is a main staple of the Gerson diet.
- Spinach should not be eaten raw on the Gerson Therapy, because in its raw form, it contains oxalic acid, which inhibits nutrient absorption. It is perfectly fine when cooked, but keep in mind that spinach releases a relatively large amount of water and oxalic acid when cooked. For this reason, the water left after cooking is bitter and should be discarded.
- Corn can be boiled in distilled water or eaten raw.

- Most spices are prohibited from the Gerson diet; however, you are encouraged to use fresh or dried organic herbs to enhance the flavor of a dish. Consult the list of forbidden and permitted foods to see what spices and herbs are allowed on the Gerson diet.
- As any top chef will tell you, presentation is everything! If you find yourself growing bored with the foods on the diet, come up with creative ways to make the dishes more visually appealing.

Appliances and cookware to avoid:

Microwave Ovens. Studies indicate that microwave ovens may affect chemical changes in the foods they cook, making them more difficult to assimilate. The radiation breaks down the cell structures of the food, and cause significant nutrient loss. Microwaving food in plastic containers is particularly dangerous, as the heat causes the plastic to emanate xenoestrogens and carcinogens into the foods. There is also evidence that some microwave ovens do not effectively contain the radiation within the oven, and emit significant amounts of radiation into the kitchen , “cooking the cook” along with the food.

Teflon and non-stick cookware. Like microwave ovens, there is a high price to pay for the convenience of non-stick pots and pans, as they are highly toxic and environmentally hazardous. When the chemical coating on non-stick cookware is heated, it releases toxic fumes and carcinogens into the air and into the food.

Aluminum cookware. Do not use any pots, pans or other cookware that contain aluminum, which has been linked to Alzheimer’s, neurological disorders, kidney disease, and a number of other health problems. Stainless steel or glass cookware is recommended.

Pressure cookers. Pressure cookers are not recommended for several reasons. First: they are frequently made of aluminum. More importantly, pressure cookers are designed to cook at high temperature, and Dr. Gerson believed that the high heat damages the colloidal structure of foods and, consequently, the proteins essential for rebuilding the body. Foods on the Gerson diet must be slow-cooked over low heat.

References for Further Reading

Healing the Gerson Way, by Charlotte Gerson and Beata Bishop

- Chapter 12: Preparing Foods and Juices—The Basic Rules.
- Chapter 9: The Gerson Household.

A Cancer Therapy: Results of 50 Cases, by Dr. Max Gerson, MD.

- Chapter III: Directions for General Nutrition
- Chapter XXV: Cancer Diet and its Preparation.

The Gerson Therapy Handbook

- Chapter 2: Going Home, the Gerson Household.