

Bland Diet

Diarrhea is best managed when its cause is known and specific therapy can be instituted. This would require an examination and consultation with the veterinarian and testing a fecal sample. Sometimes additional testing, blood work, radiographs and additional diagnostics are necessary, especially in ongoing diarrhea. While waiting for an appointment with your vet, symptomatic management is often attempted. Your veterinarian will likely recommend a bland diet as part of the treatment protocol.

The best thing for an upset stomach is food that does not require much digestion: A simple source of protein and carbohydrates without fats, oils, or seasoning.

A bland diet, especially a homemade, one is not balanced for long term health. However, it can be quite helpful for GI upset in the short term. Bland diets can be fed for 3-4 days until your pet has a normal consistency stool, after which you should slowly transition them back to their regular diet over 3-4 meals. Rapid changes in diet can cause diarrhea and vomiting.

The goal of feeding a bland diet for GI upset is to cause as little irritation to the GI tract as possible while still providing nourishment to your pet. While feeding a bland diet, do not feed any treats or any other food other than the bland diet. Here are some ingredients to use when preparing your dog's temporary bland diet.

For protein:

- Cooked ground beef, chicken or turkey; drain the fat after cooking
- Boiled or baked chicken or turkey, no skin or bones
- Scrambled eggs with no seasoning
- Low-fat cottage cheese

For carbohydrates:

- Cooked white or brown rice

Regardless of which combination you choose, combine ingredients in a "half and half" ratio of starch to meat (e.g., 1 cup rice to 1 cup meat). Cooked diets may be refrigerated for several days or frozen for long term storage. Feed your pet the same amount of bland diet as you normally feed per day, but in smaller meals more frequently (e.g., your dog normally eats ½ cup kibble twice daily for a total of 1 cup of food per day: feed ¼ cup 4 times daily or ⅓ cup 3 times daily for a total of 1 cup of bland food daily)

There are prescription bland diets available from your veterinarian if you choose not to make one at home. When it is necessary to be on a bland diet long term, most veterinarians prefer to prescribe a commercially prepared, more balanced bland diet such as Hills i/d, Purina EN or Royal Canin Gastrointestinal. These are available in canned or dry kibble.

Avoiding asking too much from the gut (by providing easily digestible foods) while still providing necessary building blocks for healing can sometimes be enough to allow the gut to reset and heal itself. If a bland diet alone is not enough to heal your pet's GI issues, it certainly helps. Be sure to contact your veterinarian if the diarrhea does not improve after a day or two of bland diet, if your pet's condition worsens or if they are vomiting as well.