

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 veterinarian, symptomatic management is often attempted. Your veterinarian will likely recommend a bland diet as part of the treatment protocol and this is something you can start at home.

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

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 in some pets. While feeding a bland diet, do not feed any treats or any other food other than the bland diet. It is usually best to give your pet's GI tract a rest (no food but small amounts of water) for about 6-12 hours before feeding. Here are some ingredients to use when preparing your dog's 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
- Soft boiled or scrambled eggs with no seasoning
- Low-fat cottage cheese or plain low fat yogurt

For carbohydrates:

- Cooked white or brown rice
- Organic canned pumpkin (plain, no spices or seasonings)
- Boiled potatoes (white or sweet, peeled)
- Cooked pasta

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) or. 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 offered 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.)

Another option would be feeding your pet congee. For more information and instructions on making this, please refer to this blog post by holistic veterinarian and author Dr Judy Morgan: <https://drjudymorgan.com/blogs/blog/my-tummy-hurts-caring-for-your-ailing-pet>.

A bland diet may not be balanced for long term, however, it can be quite helpful for GI upset in the short term. For long term homemade diets you can provide complete nutrition with a supplement found at www.balance.it or specifically formulated recipes for pets like the ones at www.drjudymorgan.com in the resource section or in one of her books.

There are prescription bland diets available from your veterinarian if you choose not to make one at home. Some of these are 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, if they are vomiting as well or if they are lethargic or listless.