

Diet and Activity Recommendations After Gastric Bypass Surgery

Eating the right foods in the right amounts will ensure your success in losing weight and keeping it off following surgery. Staying physically active will also help you maintain your weight loss.

These recommendations provide you with important information to guide your food and activity choices after surgery. Contact your surgeon, nurse or dietitian if you have specific concerns regarding what and when to eat and how to stay physically active.

Nutrition guidelines

Following surgery, you typically progress through different phases. Every individual progresses at a different pace and some individuals may need to stay in one phase longer than others. The table below briefly explains the phases and their timeframe. However, your surgeon may advance you at a different pace or have you skip certain phases.

Phase	Diet	Duration
1	Clear liquid	2 to 4 days
2	Full liquid	4 days to 3 weeks
3	Pureed	2 weeks to 1 month
4	Soft	1 month to 6 to 8 weeks
5	Normal	Begin at week 8. This will be your lifelong way of eating.

Tips for meal planning

Plan ahead for the types and amounts of food you will eat after your surgery. You will only be able to eat very small amounts initially (1 to 2 tablespoons), so it's important to choose your foods wisely. The following tips will help you get enough nutrition from a limited amount of food. Eventually your stomach will be able to hold ½ to ¾ cup of food; however, the same guidelines apply.

- ✓ **Drink liquids 30 minutes before meals or 30 minutes after meals, *not* during meals.**
- ✓ **Eat protein first.** It is essential that you get enough protein for healing, nutrition and to prevent loss of lean muscle mass. You will need a minimum of 50 grams

of protein every day. Protein is found in many foods, not just meat. Review the table in the next section for more information about the amount of protein found in foods.

- ✓ **Eat balanced meals.** A balanced meal includes vegetables, fruits and whole grains. These foods are higher in fiber, which will help keep you feeling satisfied. Eating foods in this category can also reduce constipation.
- ✓ **Eat three meals each day.**
- ✓ **Avoid foods that are high in sugar or fat.** Eat foods with less than 10 grams of sugar per serving. Choose low-fat foods with 3 grams of fat or less per serving.
- ✓ **Take small bites and chew food well.** The outlet from your new stomach pouch is very small — less than the size of a dime. Foods that are not chewed well may block this area, which causes nausea and/or vomiting.
- ✓ **Eat slowly.** Eating quickly doesn't allow time for your brain to signal you are satisfied, so you are likely to eat more than you need. You should spend at least 20 minutes eating at each meal. Set a timer to measure your pace.
- ✓ **Avoid eating at the computer or in front of the TV.** Sit at the table so you can pay attention to your body's hunger cues.
- ✓ **Stop eating when you feel satisfied.** If you continue to eat after you feel satisfied, you may experience nausea, vomiting and/or pain, in addition to stretching your stomach pouch.
- ✓ **Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of non-calorie liquids between meals.**

Foods that may be difficult to tolerate

- Tough meats, beef
- Fruits or vegetables with peels/skins (e.g., apples, grapes, potatoes, corn)
- Gaseous vegetables (e.g., broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts)
- Soft-textured breads (toasting bread increases tolerance)
- Rice and pasta
- Milk and dairy products
- Fried foods
- Dried fruits, nuts, seeds, popcorn
- Raw vegetables
- Stringy foods, such as celery or asparagus
- Carbonated beverages

Protein content of foods

Protein should be your first priority in meal planning. Protein is used to create, maintain and repair your hair, bones, organs and muscles.

Some surgeons may recommend you take a protein supplement after your surgery to ensure you get adequate nutrients to promote healing. Sugar-free Carnation® Instant Breakfast®, powdered dry milk and soy powder can add protein to your diet. You will not need to add these supplements once you are able to tolerate adequate protein in phase 5. However, it is always best to discuss this with your surgeon.

Protein Content of Liquids and Foods

Liquids and Foods	Average Protein
Full liquids	
1 cup skim, 1%, or soy milk	7 to 8 grams
½ cup nonfat yogurt	5 grams
½ cup Cream of Wheat [®] (prepared)	3 grams
*1 packet Carnation [®] Instant Breakfast [®] (sugar-free) made with 1 cup skim milk	12 grams
½ cup cream soup	6 to 8 grams
½ cup sugar-free pudding	4 grams
½ cup sugar-free Jell-O [®]	1.5 grams
*4 tablespoons nonfat dry milk	8 grams
*soy protein powder (per serving)	20 to 25 grams
Soft/pureed Foods	
½ cup plain oatmeal	4 grams
½ cup mashed potatoes	2 grams
½ cup low-fat cottage cheese, small curd	14 grams
1 poached or scrambled egg	6 grams
1 oz. or 2 tablespoons pureed chicken	9 grams
1 oz. or 2 tablespoons thinly sliced deli meat	6 grams
2 tablespoons peanut butter	7 grams
1 oz. or 2 tablespoons tuna	7 grams
1 oz. or 2 tablespoons salmon	7 grams
¼ cup tofu	5 grams
¼ cup beans, legumes, e.g., kidney beans	3 grams
2 tablespoons mozzarella cheese (shredded)	8 grams
Regular foods	
1 oz. or 2 tablespoons meat, poultry, fish	7 grams

*can be added to foods (e.g., pudding, mashed potatoes, oatmeal) or liquids

Sizing up your portions

1 oz. = the size of four stacked dice or your thumb

½ cup = the size of a racquet ball

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provide the main source of energy for your body. They also provide many nutrients. However, not all carbohydrates are created equal. The most nutritious carbohydrates are found in a variety of whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products (milk and yogurt).

Sugar

Limiting simple sugars in your diet is necessary to prevent “dumping syndrome,” which occurs when the lower end of the small intestine fills too quickly with undigested food from the stomach. Symptoms usually occur during or right after a meal and include nausea, bloating, diarrhea, cold sweats and/or lightheadedness. To help prevent dumping syndrome, choose foods and beverages that are sugar-free or low in sugar.

- ✓ Read food labels and avoid foods with more than 10 grams of sugar per serving.
- ✓ If sugar is one of the first three ingredients listed on a food label, avoid it. Key words to look for include sugar, glucose, honey, dextrose, corn syrup, fructose, sucrose and molasses.
- ✓ Be cautious of condiments that contain sugar such as ketchup, honey mustard dressing, sweet and sour sauce or barbeque sauce.
- ✓ Choose sugar-free beverages such as Crystal Light[®], sugar-free Kool-Aid[®], sugar-free iced tea or diet Snapple[®].

Vitamins and minerals

Following gastric bypass surgery, you may be at greater risk for developing iron, folate, calcium, B12, and Vitamin D deficiencies. Because much of the small intestine has been bypassed in this surgery, the absorptive surface for nutrients is limited. To prevent deficiency, *you will need to take a multivitamin with minerals and iron, B12 and calcium with Vitamin D daily for the rest of your life.* Initially a children’s chewable multivitamin plus iron works best. As your tolerance improves, you will be able to take an adult multivitamin with minerals and iron or prenatal vitamins. Talk with your surgeon about which type of multivitamin is most appropriate for you.

These are the vitamins you will need to take daily for the rest of your life:

- **Multi-vitamin with minerals and iron**
- **Calcium citrate** (1200 mg/day), e.g., Citracal[®] with Vitamin D. Make sure to take at separate times of the day and also take separate from supplemental iron.
- **Vitamin B12** — either a daily sublingual dose (under the tongue) or a B12 injection every 4 to 6 weeks. Discuss the dose and method that is best for you with your surgeon.

Physical activity and exercise

Try to get out of bed and walk as soon as possible after surgery. Start slowly and increase your activity at a pace that feels comfortable to you. The more active you are, the healthier you will be. You’ll also be more likely to lose weight and keep it off if you maintain an active lifestyle.

Start by focusing on physical activity. Physical activity is any movement that uses energy. Build physical activity into your day by taking the stairs instead of the elevator, doing housework, yard work, walking the dog, etc. Any activity counts: more is better

than some, and some is better than none. Aim to get 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day of the week.

Once you feel comfortable doing 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, you may want to try aerobic activities. Aerobic exercise can help you succeed at losing weight and keeping it off.

Aerobic exercise includes any exercise that involves rhythmic motion of your arms and legs that is performed at a pace that increases your breathing and your heart rate for at least 10 minutes. Aerobic exercise includes activities such as brisk walking, biking and swimming. These activities should be performed for at least 10 minutes at a time. Again, start slowly. If you cannot do 10 minutes of exercise initially, increase slowly until you have met that goal. If you haven't exercised before, ask your health care provider or surgeon about exercise restrictions before starting a program.

Tips to build physical activity and exercise into your day

- Plan ahead — include purposeful activity every day
- Set specific, attainable goals, such as “I will walk for 10 minutes at lunch today”
- Find a “buddy” to be active with you
- Buy and wear comfortable shoes and replace every six months

Strategies for success

1. Keep a food and activity diary

People who have successfully lost weight and kept it off credit much of their success to self-monitoring of food choices and activity. This process increases your awareness of food choices and also helps you balance your diet. Another benefit is helping to identify possible food intolerances. In a small notebook, keep track of:

- ✓ Amount and type of food
- ✓ Amount and type of beverage (aim for at least 8 cups or 64 oz. daily)
- ✓ Amount of protein (aim for at least 50 grams per day)
- ✓ How long it took you to eat your meal
- ✓ Your feelings while eating. Are you eating to cope with feelings of boredom, sadness, loneliness?
- ✓ Symptoms of food intolerance

3. Seek support

Ask for support from family, friends, coworkers, or find out about support groups in your area. Support groups provide an excellent opportunity to share your thoughts with others who fully understand what you are experiencing.

2. Go to every appointment

Review the follow-up schedule your surgeon has provided you. It is essential to your success that you go to every appointment.