



DIET AFTER ESOPHAGEAL SURGERY

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This diet information is for patients who have recently had esophageal surgery to correct reflux disease or to repair various types of hernias, such as hiatal hernia and intrathoracic stomach. This diet may also be used for other gastrointestinal surgeries, such as Heller myotomy and repair of achalasia. The diet will help control diarrhea, excess gas and swallowing problems, which may occur after this type of surgery.

Keeping Your Stomach from Stretching

- ◆ Eat small, frequent meals (six to eight per day). This will help you consume the majority of the nutrients you need without causing your stomach to feel full or distended.
- ◆ Drinking large amounts of fluids with meals can stretch your stomach. You may drink fluids between meals as often as you like, but limit fluids to ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) with meals and one cup (8 fluid ounces) with snacks.

Avoiding Problems Swallowing

- ◆ Sit upright while eating and stay upright for 30 minutes after each meal. Gravity can help food move through your digestive tract. **Do not lie down after eating.** Sit upright for 2 hours after your last meal or snack of the day.
- ◆ Eat very slowly. Take your time when eating.
- ◆ Take small bites and chew your food well to help aid in swallowing and digestion.
- ◆ Avoid crusty breads and sticky, gummy foods, such as bananas, fresh doughy breads, rolls and doughnuts. These types of foods become sticky and difficult to swallow.
- ◆ Toasted breads tend to be better tolerated.
- ◆ Lastly, if you eat sweets, consume them at the end of your meal to avoid a group of symptoms referred to as “dumping syndrome”. This describes the rapid emptying of foods from the stomach to the small intestine. Sweetened beverages, candy and desserts move more rapidly and dump quickly into the intestines. This can cause symptoms of nausea, weakness, cold sweats, cramps, diarrhea and dizzy spells.

You may have some swelling that will make it hard for you to swallow or burp. The feeling of tightness and trouble swallowing will go away over the next 3 to 12 weeks.

Avoiding Gas

- ◆ Avoid drinking through a straw. Do not chew gum or tobacco. These actions cause you to swallow air, which produces excess gas in your stomach. Chew with your mouth closed.
- ◆ Avoid any foods that cause stomach gas and distention. These foods include corn, dried beans, peas, lentils, onions, broccoli, cauliflower and any food from the cabbage family.
- ◆ Avoid carbonated drinks, alcohol, citrus and tomato products.

Diet After Surgery

After surgery, your diet will be advanced slowly by your surgeon. Generally, you will be on a clear liquid diet for the first few meals. Then you will advance to the full liquid diet for a meal or two and eventually to a soft diet.

You may have some swelling that will make it hard for you to swallow or burp because the opening will be about the size of a straw.

The feeling of tightness and trouble swallowing will go away over the next 3 to 12 weeks. Follow these diet guidelines to prevent problems after surgery. Eating and drinking are key to getting enough calories and other nutrients to help you heal.

Remember: Anytime you have trouble swallowing, increased pain, or you feel like food is stuck, return to a full liquid diet for a day or two.



When will I be able to eat a soft food diet?

___ Advance to a soft diet as tolerated

___ In 2 weeks

___ After first follow-up

___ May start regular diet in ___ weeks

Clear Liquid Diet

The first diet after surgery is the clear liquid diet. It includes the following liquids:

- ◆ Apple juice
- ◆ Cranberry juice
- ◆ Grape juice
- ◆ Chicken broth
- ◆ Beef broth
- ◆ Flavored gelatin (Jell-O)
- ◆ Decaf tea and coffee
- ◆ Caffeinated beverages are permitted based on tolerance
- ◆ Popsicles
- ◆ Italian ice

Carbonated drinks (sodas) are not allowed for the first six to eight weeks after surgery. After this time you can try them again in small amounts.

Full Liquid Diet

The full liquid diet contains anything on the clear liquid diet, plus:

- ◆ Milk, soy, rice and almond (no chocolate)
- ◆ Cream of wheat, cream of rice, grits
- ◆ Strained creamed soups (no tomato or broccoli)
- ◆ Vanilla and strawberry-flavored ice cream
- ◆ Sherbet
- ◆ Blended, custard styled or whipped yogurt (plain or vanilla only)
- ◆ Vanilla and butterscotch pudding (no chocolate or coconut)
- ◆ Nutritional drinks including Ensure, Boost, Carnation, Instant Breakfast (no chocolate-flavored)

Note: Dairy products, such as milk, ice cream and pudding, may cause diarrhea in some people just after surgery. You may need to avoid milk products. If so, substitute them with lactose-free beverages, such as soy, rice, Lactaid or almond milks.