Diet following insertion of an upper gastrointestinal (GI) stent

What is an upper GI stent?
- An upper GI stent is a flexible mesh tube that is placed in your oesophagus to help keep it open.
- This stent allows food and liquid to pass from your mouth to your stomach and intestines for digestion and absorption of nutrients.
- The stent gently expands to hold the narrowed area of your gastrointestinal tract open and should make swallowing food and fluids easier.
- Your gastroenterologist will inform you of where your stent has been placed in the upper GI tract.
- Only stents placed in the GI tract which comes into contact with food need dietary modifications. Bile duct stents do not require dietary texture modification.
- Upper GI stents include those placed in the oesophagus and/or gastro-duodenum (stomach and small intestine).

Why do I need to change my diet?
- The stent is not as wide or as flexible as your gastrointestinal tract so you will need to take care with certain foods.
- It is a narrow tube and may become blocked or clogged if you eat foods that are too hard or too sticky.
- To enable food to go down your gastrointestinal tract easily.
- To reduce your risk of blocking the stent.
- To prevent the side effects of a blocked stent which may include nausea, vomiting, reflux, oesophagitis (inflammation of the food pipe), abdominal distension, pain or even hospital readmission.

Dietary recommendations are:
- Choose foods that are soft and moist (see list).
- Add sauces, gravies, butter or margarine to moisten savoury foods that you eat.
- Add milk, yoghurt, cream, custard or ice-cream to moisten sweet foods that you eat.
- Avoid rushing meals, relax and eat your meals slowly.
• Cut your food into smaller pieces than you would normally eat, take small mouthfuls and chew all food well.
• Drink small sips of fluids before, during and after meals.
• Sit upright when eating.
• Don’t eat within 3 hours of bedtime.
• Don’t be afraid to spit out lumps of food which cannot be chewed.
• If you wear dentures, make sure they fit correctly so you can chew your food well.
• Ask your doctor or pharmacist about medications or tablets that are hard to swallow. Ask if they are available in liquid form or if they can be crushed.

Other helpful hints:
• You may need to eat and drink more often to maintain your weight and prevent dehydration. Eat 6 small meals a day instead of 3 larger ones.
• Modify family meals that the rest of your household is eating by moistening your meal with extra liquids, sauces, gravies, toppings, etc. This will save time and money.
• Use foods of different colours to make your meals look more appealing.
• Use herbs and spices to add interest to foods.

What should I do if I think the stent is blocked?
• Stop eating.
• Increase your fluid intake.
• Have a gentle walk around and then continue to drink fluids.
• If the blockage does not clear, contact your GP.

Potential problems associated with your stent:
• Acid reflux – especially if your stent is placed across the opening between the oesophagus and stomach. Anti-reflux medications may be helpful (consult your doctor for a prescription/advice). Try not to sleep too flat – prop yourself up to a 30-45° angle using pillows or a wedge.
• Pain – as the stent expands it can cause some pain in the chest area. This normally calms down after 72hrs. Please contact your doctor if you are concerned.

If you have had recent weight loss or have trouble maintaining your weight, it is important to speak to a dietitian about the best possible diet for you.

For further information, contact your dietitian or nutritionist:
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<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDED FOODS</th>
<th>FOODS TO AVOID</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Meat</strong>&lt;br&gt;chicken fish&lt;br&gt;• Tender cuts of meat – cooked slowly to tenderise (they should be fork-mashable when cooked)&lt;br&gt;• Mince dishes&lt;br&gt;• Casseroles and stews&lt;br&gt;• Fish dishes that are moist or with sauce (easily broken up with the edge of a fork)</td>
<td>• Tough, stringy, chunky, gristly or dry meats&lt;br&gt;• Dry fish or fish with bones</td>
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<td><strong>Protein alternatives</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Eggs (all types except fried or whole hard-boiled eggs)&lt;br&gt;• Well-cooked legumes&lt;br&gt;• Soft tofu e.g. crumbled</td>
<td>• Fried or hard-boiled eggs&lt;br&gt;• Dishes with nuts&lt;br&gt;• Hard or fibrous legumes</td>
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<td><strong>Vegetables</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Well cooked, non-fibrous vegetables served in small pieces or soft enough to be easily mashed with a fork&lt;br&gt;• Soft canned vegetables e.g. peas</td>
<td>• Hard, fibrous or stringy vegetables e.g. corn, broccoli stalks, celery or green beans&lt;br&gt;• All raw vegetables (including chopped and shredded)</td>
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<td><strong>Soup</strong>&lt;br&gt;• All soups except for those listed as ‘foods to avoid’</td>
<td>• Soups that have large pieces of meat or vegetables&lt;br&gt;• Soups with pieces of corn</td>
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<td><strong>Breakfast cereals</strong>&lt;br&gt;• All well-moistened cereals</td>
<td>• Coarse or dry cereals e.g. All-Bran&lt;br&gt;• Cereals with nuts or dried fruit</td>
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<td><strong>Other cereals</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Day old bread&lt;br&gt;• Bread can be softened in stews or soups&lt;br&gt;• Soft sandwiches (no crusts) with moist fillings e.g. egg &amp; mayonnaise&lt;br&gt;• Rice (well cooked)&lt;br&gt;• Soft pasta and noodles (make sure pasta is not over-cooked and has adequate sauce added to reduce “stickiness”)</td>
<td>• Fresh bread may block the stent&lt;br&gt;• Dry or crusty breads or croutons&lt;br&gt;• Sandwiches that are not thoroughly moist&lt;br&gt;• Bread with seeds or dried fruit&lt;br&gt;• Toast, crackers, pizza</td>
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<td><strong>Fruit</strong>&lt;br&gt;• All stewed or canned fruit in small pieces&lt;br&gt;• Soft, peeled fresh fruit&lt;br&gt;• Berries with small seeds e.g. strawberries</td>
<td>• Dried fruit, fruit leather, fruit peel&lt;br&gt;• Stringy, fibrous fruit e.g. pineapple&lt;br&gt;• Large/ round pieces of fruit e.g. grapes</td>
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<td><strong>Dairy foods</strong>&lt;br&gt;• All except those in the ‘avoid list’&lt;br&gt;• Hard cheese can be grated into sauces, soups or onto vegetables</td>
<td>• Yoghurt with nuts, seeds or hard pieces&lt;br&gt;• Hard cheese or crispy cooked cheese</td>
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<td><strong>Desserts</strong>&lt;br&gt;• All except those in the ‘avoid list’ unless they can be moistened with extra milk, yoghurt, cream, ice-cream</td>
<td>• Dry cakes and biscuits&lt;br&gt;• Anything with nuts, seeds, dried fruit, coconut or pineapple&lt;br&gt;• Chewy lollies e.g. toffee</td>
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<td><strong>Other foods</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Sauces, mustards, jams</td>
<td>• Popcorn&lt;br&gt;• Crisps</td>
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Adapted from the Australian standardised definitions and terminology for texture-modified foods and fluids, Nutrition & Dietetics 2007; 64 (Suppl. 2)