

Nutrition post gastrectomy

This resource is for people who've had surgery to remove part or all of the stomach. This makes the stomach smaller, so you feel full faster, and food moves into your gut quicker. As your stomach heals, you'll go through four stages of food textures. In the last stage, you should be able to eat most foods you liked before but might need to change how you eat.

When should this diet be used?

After a gastrectomy you will follow four phases of food texture. Progress as directed by your surgeon. Follow each stage to allow your body time to heal and recover from surgery. Eating harder foods too soon may cause you to become unwell.

Stage 1 – Fluids (liquids) only

- Having only fluids is important to prevent vomiting and to protect the new and healing structure of your stomach.
- Sipping drinks slowly helps you get used to your new smaller stomach size.
- Prioritise nutritious high protein and calorie fluids.

Stage 2 – Pureed (blended) food

- Choose or blend foods with fluid to a smooth paste without lumps.
- It is important to eat slowly and have small amounts of food every few hours.
- At this stage you may vomit or have pain if you:
 - Eat or drink too much at once.
 - Drink with your pureed meals.
 - Eat solid food.

Stage 3 – Soft and moist food

- Soft foods can be easily broken apart with a fork.
- Choose moist foods or add sauces to keep them moist and easy to swallow.
- Chew well and eat slowly.
- Stop eating when feeling comfortably full.

Stage 4 – Regular eating

- Chew every mouthful thoroughly before swallowing. To help prevent discomfort, avoid gristle or sinew in meats.

- Aim for a healthy balanced diet, which incorporates a wide variety of foods from the five food groups. If you are unintentionally losing weight during this phase, please discuss with your Dietitian.

Food Group	Free Fluids Diet	Pureed Diet	Soft Diet
Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles	• Strained porridge or semolina made on milk • Add pasta and rice to soups and blend to a smooth fluid consistency	• Smooth lump-free cereals (e.g. semolina, pureed porridge)	• Porridge or cereal softened with milk • Well-cooked pasta and rice • Bread with crust removed, softened with spread
Vegetables, legumes	• Vegetable juice • Add vegetables and legumes to soups and blend to a smooth fluid consistency	• Pureed or mashed vegetables (using milk, butter, oil or cheese to moisten)	• Mashed or soft-cooked vegetables (using milk, butter, oil or cheese.)
Fruit	• Fruit juice • Add fruit to milkshakes and blend to a smooth fluid consistency	• Pureed or mashed canned/ stewed fruit • Pureed or mashed soft fresh fruit e.g. banana, paw paw, pear	• Fruit juice • Canned or stewed fruit • Soft fresh fruit e.g. banana, paw paw, mango, pear, watermelon
Milk, yoghurt, cheese	• Milk • Drinking yoghurt • Custard	• Milk • Plain yoghurt (no fruit /nuts/seeds) • Custard	• Milk • Fruit yoghurt • Custard
Meat, fish, poultry, tofu, eggs, nuts, legumes	• Add meat, fish, poultry and legumes to soups and blend to a smooth fluid consistency	• Pureed meat, fish, poultry and legumes with gravy/sauce e.g. pureed casserole – add cream or cheese for added nutrition. • Silken tofu - mashed	• Soft, cooked meat, fish, and poultry with gravy/sauce e.g. casseroles, mince • Omelette, or scrambled, poached or boiled eggs • Baked beans, lentils
Extra foods	• Thin custards, plain ice cream, jelly, cordial, Milo, flavoured milk	• Mousse, crème caramel, butter, baked egg custard	• Creamed rice, cake served with ice cream or custard, chocolate

Common problems and management

1. Feeling full early

- Eat small meals every few hours, aiming for six or more meals and snacks each day.
- Separate food and drinks when possible. Aim to keep drinks away from meals by at least 30 minutes.

2. Unintentional weight loss

- Include foods that contain fat and protein at every opportunity e.g. eggs, meat, chicken, fish, tofu, baked beans, cheese, milk, olive oil, avocado or nuts (including peanut butter).
- Include nourishing drinks – select milkshakes, Milo, Sustagen, or Ensure. Your Dietitian may recommend specific nutritional supplement drinks.
- Monitor your weight weekly and let your Dietitian or GP know if you keep losing weight.

3. Dumping syndrome or Diarrhoea

Normally there is a muscle at the bottom of the stomach that controls the amount of food the stomach lets into the small bowel. This muscle is often removed or doesn't work as well following a gastrectomy, causing food to move too quickly from the stomach into the small bowel.

You may have:

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Bloating, cramping or diarrhoea.
- Palpitations, sweating or shakiness.
- Fullness.
- Lack of concentration or tiredness.

Most people experience symptoms 10 to 30 minutes after eating (early dumping syndrome), others have symptoms one to four hours after eating (late dumping syndrome).

To help prevent symptoms of dumping syndrome:

- Avoid large meals by eating small and frequent meals.
- Separate food and fluids.
- Avoid food and drinks that contain a lot of sugar (e.g., regular cordial, soft drink, mixed alcoholic beverages).
- Include high fibre foods or trial a fibre supplement (e.g., *Benefibre*, *ProNourish*) if you have late dumping symptoms. High fibre foods include lentils, baked beans, oat bran, wholegrain breads and cereals, skins on fruit and vegetables.
- Lying down after eating may help if you experience severe symptoms.
- Taking a starchy snack (e.g., slice of bread, banana, oatmeal biscuit) may help symptoms.

4. Vitamins and Minerals

When all or part of your stomach is removed, your body may not be able to absorb important nutrients, including vitamins or minerals such as **vitamin B12**, **vitamin D**, **calcium** and **iron**.

Your doctor should regularly check these levels.

Multivitamin supplementation is needed by most people after gastrectomy. Discuss with your Dietitian or Doctor about what you need.

Summary

- Diet progression is individual and will be guided by your surgeon.
- Getting enough nutrition is challenging with liquid and puree diets. Include a wide variety of nourishing foods in the early stages.
- Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are common. Lifelong monitoring is important.

For further information, contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist _____