

Eating after a Whipple's surgery

This resource will help you choose the best foods to eat and drink after you have had a Whipple's surgery. A dietitian will work with you to make an individualised nutrition plan that works for you.

What is a Whipple's surgery?

In a Whipple's surgery, parts of the stomach, small bowel (intestine) and pancreas are removed (see picture). These are part of your digestive system and help you break down food. You may have symptoms after the surgery and need to make changes to your diet to help you feel better.

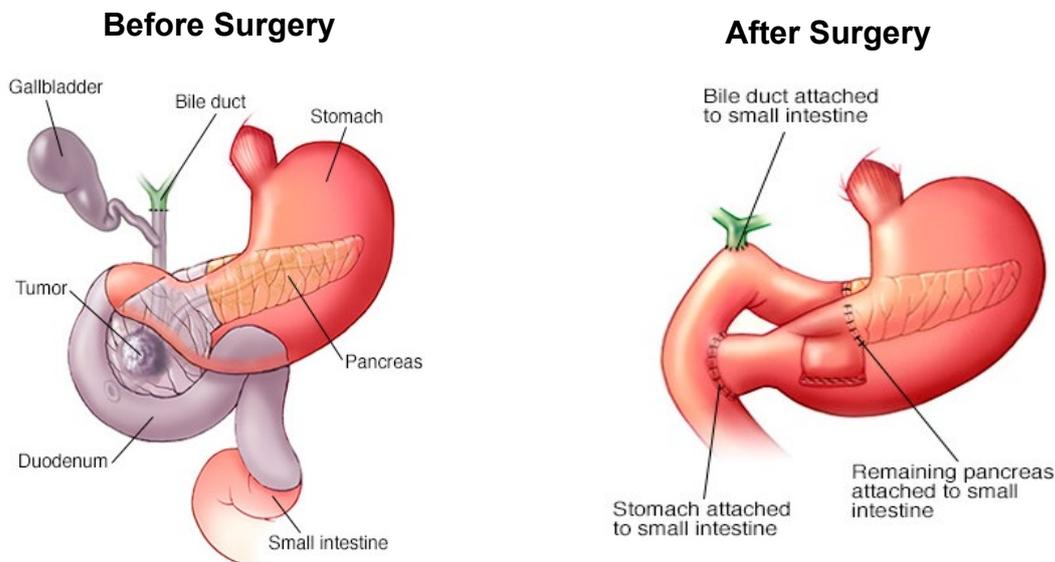


Image
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What are the possible side effects after a Whipple's surgery?

- Poor appetite
- Feeling full quickly
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Abdominal discomfort or bloating
- Sweating, flushing or light-headedness
- Diarrhoea (loose bowel motions)
- Bowel motions may be loose, oily, yellow, or difficult to flush.
- Weight loss

How can I manage these side effects?

- Eat 6-8 small meals per day because part of the stomach has been removed and you can fill up on foods/fluids quickly.
- Eat slowly and chew food well to avoid bloating or discomfort.
- Have drinks at least 30 minutes before or after meals, instead of with meals to avoid filling up too quickly.
- Limit foods and drinks containing lots of sugar e.g. cordial, soft drink, sports drinks, energy drinks, lollies. This will help control your blood sugar levels and prevent foods passing through too quickly.

What foods should I eat to stop me losing weight?

- Your doctor may suggest softer foods for a few weeks after surgery.
- Foods and drinks high in protein and calories will assist you to recover and prevent weight loss (see table below).
- Include a source of protein at each meal, e.g. meat, chicken, fish, eggs, milk, cheese or yoghurt.
- Eat nutritious snacks between meals e.g. cheese and crackers, nuts, dried fruit, yoghurt, dairy desserts.
- Choose nourishing fluids e.g. milk, Sustagen or Ensure rather than tea and coffee. You can find nutritional supplement drinks at pharmacies and supermarkets. Your dietitian will advise you on how much you need each day.

High protein foods	High energy foods
Meat, chicken, fish	Avocado
Milk (plain or flavoured), cheese, eggs	Oil (olive, sunflower, canola, rice-bran)
Yoghurt, custard, dairy desserts	Dried fruit
Nuts and seeds	Muesli or nut bar
Legumes (e.g. baked beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils)	Margarine spread, salad dressings, cream
Nutritional supplement drinks / powders (e.g. Sustagen, Ensure, Resource Plus, AdVital, Beneprotein)	

Why do I need pancreatic enzymes when I eat?

- Some people may require pancreatic enzymes after Whipple's surgery.
- The pancreas produces pancreatic enzymes to digest the food you eat and some fluids you drink. Enzymes break down the fat and protein in your food into smaller parts which can be taken up and used by your body.
- If you don't take your enzymes, you may have loose, oily, yellow, or difficult to flush bowel motions (poo). You may also lose weight without trying and develop vitamin deficiencies and other symptoms.

Your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian can provide more information for you on how to take your enzymes.

Am I at risk of nutrient deficiencies?

Yes – you may become deficient in iron and/or vitamin B12 after this surgery. You may also develop other deficiencies. Your doctor will check your nutrient levels and recommend supplements if you need them.

Final tips

- You can improve your symptoms by changing the frequency, size and how slow/fast you eat.
- You may also need pancreatic enzymes and other medications to manage your symptoms.
- Check your weight every week. If you continue to lose weight, or have ongoing symptoms speak to your doctor and/or ask for a referral to a dietitian.

Things I can do to improve my diet

1.

2.

3.

For further information contact your dietitian: _____