

Information about your diet after surgery on your gut



Eating and drinking after your gut surgery

Your surgical team will recommend a gradual return to drinking and then eating. For example, they will want to check that you can tolerate drinks before they suggest that you eat.

The rate at which you can return to your usual diet depends on the type of surgery you have had, and your gut's response to your surgery. Everyone is different and gut function takes longer to return in some people than in others. Your team will let you know when you can progress to the next stage.

What can I eat and drink after surgery?

Stage 1: Clear fluids (CF)

Water, tea/coffee without milk, herbal tea, clear fruit juice e.g. apple juice, clear fruit squash e.g. elderflower, flavoured still water, jelly, Fortijuce, Bovril/Marmite drinks (made with hot water).

Stage 2: Free fluids (FF) includes any clear fluids plus:

Tea/coffee with milk, milk, milky drinks e.g. milkshakes, fruit smoothies*, fruit juice*, yogurt*, ice cream, soup*, Meritene shake, Meritene soup, Forticreme/Fortisip/Fortisip Compact.

**no bits e.g. no fruit pips/seeds/pulp/pith, small pieces of vegetables in soup*

Stage 3: Light diet (LD)

Introduce small portions of soft and low fibre foods by selecting foods from the 'Foods to choose' column of the tables on pages 4-6. Fibrous foods are normally recommended as part of a healthy diet. The fibre helps to move food and fluids through the bowel and adds bulk to stools. However, for the first week or two after gut surgery, a diet lower in fibre is likely to be better tolerated.

The Light Diet: sample day meal plan

For your first day of the Light Diet on the ward, you could choose:

Breakfast	Small bowl of low fibre cereal Slice of white bread toast, butter and yeast extract White roll, butter and seedless jam A thick and creamy yogurt
Mid-morning snack	Banana Rice pudding pot A thick and creamy yogurt A plain biscuit
Lunch	Tomato or chicken soup and a white bread roll Ocean pie Plain ham/egg/cheese sandwich (white bread) Chocolate sponge (or any plain sponge pudding)
Mid-afternoon snack	Cheese and biscuits Milkshake Jelly and ice cream
Dinner	Plain or cheese omelette (no vegetables) Mashed potato and gravy Small portion of shepherd's pie or lasagne Ice cream and jelly.

From day 2 onwards choose similar foods but start to increase your portion sizes. Start to introduce small portions of well-cooked root vegetables such as carrots and swede, and tinned peeled fruit e.g. pear/peach slices.

See 'Stage 4: return to your usual diet' on page 9 for tips on how to build up your diet so you're eating normally for you.

Types of food	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Breads, crackers and flour products	White bread and rolls English muffin Crumpets Waffles Pancakes Scones White crackers e.g. cream crackers, water biscuits or Matzo	Wholemeal, wholegrain, granary or seeded bread and rolls 50:50 bread Bread or bread products with nuts, seeds, or dried fruit Wholemeal crackers e.g. Ryvita
Breakfast cereals	Corn flakes Frosted flakes Rice Krispies Puffed wheat Oat based cereals e.g. rolled oat porridge, Ready Brek	Bran based cereals e.g. All Bran, Branflakes Wholewheat cereals e.g. Shreddies, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix Cereals containing dried fruit or nuts e.g. granola, muesli, crunchy nut flakes
Starchy foods	White rice White pasta or noodles Potatoes without their skins e.g. boiled, mashed or sweet Couscous or bulgur wheat Tapioca Cassava Polenta	Brown rice Wholemeal pasta or noodles Wholegrains e.g. quinoa, pearl barley The skins of potatoes
Dairy products	Milk Hard, soft or cream cheese Yoghurt Crème fraiche Fromage frais Cream	Yoghurt with pips, nuts, or seeds Cheese with fruit or nuts

Types of food	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Vegetables and salad Aim for 2 portions per day	Most well cooked, soft or mashable vegetables without the peel or seeds Passata (sieved tomato) Vegetable based soups	Raw or lightly cooked vegetables Vegetables with seeds e.g. cucumber or tomato Vegetables with skins or husks e.g. peas, sweetcorn, celery High fibre vegetables e.g. mushrooms, spinach, cabbage Beans, pulses and legumes
Fruit Aim for 2 portions per day	Soft, ripe, peeled fruit without seeds, pips and stalks e.g. banana, peach, plum or apple Most canned or cooked fruits e.g. fruit cocktail	Citrus fruits Berries e.g. blackberries or strawberries Prunes Dried fruit Fruit juice with bits Smoothies that contain whole blended fruits
Nuts and seeds	Smooth peanut butter	All nuts and seeds Crunchy peanut butter Coconut
Meat, fish and alternatives	Lean meat Poultry Fish Eggs e.g. poached, scrambled, omelette Quorn and meat-free mince or pieces Tofu and tempeh Meat based soups	Tough, gristly meat Fatty or fried meats High fat processed meats e.g. sausages, burgers, Kiev Pies/pastry Fried eggs

Types of food	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Desserts	Custard Ice cream Sponge pudding Milk puddings e.g. mousse, rice pudding, Crème caramel Jelly Stewed / tinned fruit (see above for details)	Puddings with dried fruit, nuts, seeds or coconut
Snacks	Plain biscuits Plain cake and scones Chocolate Confectionery e.g. fudge Sweets Crisps Popcorn	Biscuit, cakes or scones made with wholemeal flour Oat biscuits/flapjacks Cereal bars Biscuits, cakes and chocolate with nuts, seeds or dried fruit
Drinks	Smooth fruit juice Squash Fizzy drinks Tea, coffee or fruit tea	Fried foods
Miscellaneous	Jelly jam Shredless marmalade Lemon curd Honey or syrup Gravy Sauces e.g. Ketchup, brown sauce, mustard, Soy sauce Salad dressings e.g. mayonnaise or vinaigrette	Jam with bits Marmalade with shred Pickles and chutneys

If you need to follow this diet for a longer period of time (e.g. more than a month) your medical/surgical team or dietitian will advise.

Stage 4: return to your usual diet

When you no longer need a Light Diet, increase the size of your food portions and the amount of fibre in your diet.

If you have returned home while eating a Light Diet, you may wonder when you can start stage 4. The best guide is how you are tolerating your Light Diet. If you feel you could eat larger portions, first eat larger portions of the Light Diet foods.

If you tolerate these larger portions, then gradually include some of the higher fibre foods in the 'Foods to avoid' column of the tables on pages 4-6. The best way to start is to change from white to wholemeal bread for 1 week. Then try higher-fibre fruits and vegetables for a week, and finally introduce other foods such as nuts and seeds.

Following surgery you need more energy and protein to heal wounds and fight infection (up to 20% more). If you are struggling your dietitian may advise nutritional supplements.

Do you have any other useful tips?

- Eat little and often. Smaller meals with snacks may be easier to manage.
- Chew food well.
- Ensure you are drinking plenty. Aim for 8 -10 cups/glasses of fluid a day.
- To ensure you get enough vitamin C consider including a glass of fruit juice or vitamin C enriched squash daily.
- Some people find high fat foods are poorly tolerated and therefore may be best avoided e.g. fried or fatty foods.
- Caffeine can increase the speed that foods and fluids move through the bowel. Consider choosing decaffeinated drinks.
- If you are on the Light Diet for more than a month, and are unable to manage 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day, you may need a multivitamin and mineral supplement. Speak with your doctor, GP or dietitian for further advice.

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