

After Bariatric Surgery: My Guide to Eating Well

Bariatric surgery changes the size of your stomach and how it works. After surgery, you'll be asked to change what, how, and how much you eat.

It takes time to learn how different foods and drinks feel after surgery. Use the food lists in this handout to help you make food and drink choices after surgery. Talk to a dietitian for teaching and support to make changes.

Getting started with solid foods

After surgery, most people will have only full fluids for about two weeks. Your surgeon and dietitian will let you know when you can start eating solid foods in addition to full fluids.

When you start to eat solid foods, the amount you can eat will be small. Start with only a small portion of solid food at one time (about two or three bites).

At first, you may tolerate softer, moist foods better. Here are some you can try:

- eggs
- fish – canned tuna or salmon (no bones)
- cottage or ricotta cheese
- mashed potato
- cooked carrots
- soft fresh fruit, peeled
- soft canned fruit in juice or water

When you're starting solid foods, try one new food at a time. If a food causes discomfort, write it down in your journal and try the food again another time. Keep eating the foods that worked for you.

Choose small portions of solid food

As you heal after surgery, slowly increase your portions of solid food, but eat only until you start to feel full. It's ok to leave food on your plate.

Over time, you may be able to eat more food: about 1–1½ cups (250–375 mL). You may be able to eat a bit more or a bit less than that. How much you can eat depends on your surgery, your healing after surgery, and the texture and type of food.

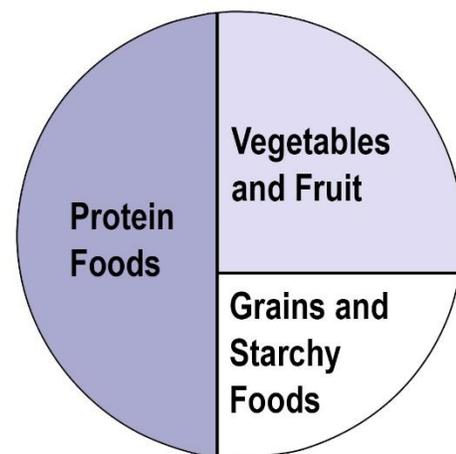
Eat small portions at least 4 times per day. If you are eating very little you may need to eat 5–6 times per day.

Use your plate as a guide

You can use your plate as a guide to building healthy meals with smaller portions.

Start with a smaller plate (like a side plate). Imagine the plate separated into three parts.

- The larger part is for Protein Foods.
- One smaller part is for Vegetables and Fruit.
- The smallest part is for Grains and Starchy Foods.



Separate solids and liquids

Eating and drinking at the same time can cause:

- overfilling of your pouch or sleeve
- nausea, vomiting, or heartburn
- liquids may empty your pouch faster, leaving you feeling hungry sooner

Try these tips:

- Don't drink with meals and snacks.
- Wait 30 minutes after eating solid foods before drinking.
- Sip on fluids between meals and snacks.

Avoid drinks with bubbles or gas (carbonated)

Gas in drinks like pop and mineral water may cause fullness, discomfort, heartburn, or nausea.

Limit food and drinks with sugar

Choose unsweetened food and drinks more often. Food and drinks that contain sugars can cause diarrhea, nausea, sweating, or dizziness (dumping syndrome) for some people after bariatric surgery.

Check in with your body signals

Some people find that their body signals for hunger and fullness feel different after surgery. Hunger may feel like your pouch or sleeve is empty. Fullness may feel like a pressure higher up in your chest instead of lower down in your stomach.

While you're eating, check in often with your body signals. You may find it helpful to rate your hunger or fullness on a scale:

Not hungry	Getting hungry	Very hungry
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1	2	3	4	5
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Not full	Getting full	Too full
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Checking in with body signals is easier if you're only doing one thing at that time: eating. Don't eat while you watch TV, read, use your phone or computer, drive, or work.

Take your time to eat

Make time to enjoy eating your meal or snack (about 15–30 minutes). If you eat too fast, you may throw up because you didn't chew the food well enough, or because you overfilled the pouch or sleeve.

Record what you eat and drink

You may want to record:

- what and how much you eat and drink
- when you eat and drink
- any side effects or questions you have

Your healthcare team may ask you to record other things not on this list.

Do I need to take vitamin and mineral supplements?

Yes. After bariatric surgery, you will need to take vitamin and mineral supplements even if you are eating well and have normal levels in your blood. Ask your dietitian which vitamins and mineral supplements are right for you.

Food and drink lists

Use the lists on the next pages to guide your choices after surgery. Each list has 3 groups:

 Choose more often
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foods that are healthier choices.• Foods that are less likely to cause discomfort after surgery
 Try with caution (texture)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foods that may cause some people discomfort because the texture of the food is difficult to chew well after surgery. For example, tough, chewy, stringy, sticky, or gummy.• Food tolerance may or may not change over time.• Foods may or may not be healthier choices.
 Choose less often
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foods that are less healthy choices because they are higher in calories, sugar, fat, or salt, or lower in fibre.• Foods that may or may not cause discomfort after surgery.

My favourite foods

In the spaces below, you can write favourite foods that aren't in the food lists on the next pages. You can work with your dietitian to decide whether each food you write is *Choose more often*, *Try with caution*, or *Choose less often*.

 Choose more often	
 Try with caution (texture)	
 Choose less often	

M.F. = Milk Fat	 = Foods higher in salt (sodium) Eat less of these	 = Foods with added sugar Eat less of these
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Protein Foods

Protein is found in foods like milk products, meat, poultry, fish, seafood, beans, lentils, and chickpeas. It helps you heal after surgery, keeps your muscle and bones healthy, and helps fight infections. Eat higher protein foods at meals and snacks to meet your protein needs, and to help manage appetite and blood sugar.

Tips:

- Nuts, seeds, and nut and seed butters have some protein and healthy fats. However, they are higher in calories, so choose smaller portions.
- Even if you have milk products, you may need calcium supplements to meet your needs after bariatric surgery. Ask your dietitian about vitamin and mineral supplements you need.
- You may want to try a soft, moist food with a crispy, crunchy food, like tuna on crackers or scrambled egg with diced vegetables.

Protein Foods, continued

Choose more often

Protein foods that are lower in fat or have healthy fats are in the *Choose more often* list.

Use moist cooking methods for meats such as a slow cooker, braising, or pressure cooker pots.

Milk and alternatives

Drink fluids like milk between your meals.

- milk, skim or 1%, unsweetened
- milk, lactose-reduced, skim or 1%, unsweetened
- buttermilk, 1%
- kefir, 2% or less, plain or no added sugar
- soy beverages, fortified, unsweetened
- evaporated skim milk
- cheese, less than 20% M.F. 
- cheese, ricotta, less than 10% M.F. 
- cottage cheese, fat-free or 1% M.F. 
- creamy soups made with low fat milk
- pudding, made with low fat milk, sugar substitute
- yogurt, Greek or Icelandic type, plain or no added sugar, 2% M.F. or less
- yogurt or yogurt drinks, plain or no added sugar, 2% M.F. or less

Meat and alternatives

- beans, lentils or chickpeas, dried and cooked or canned
- chicken or turkey, ground or roasted, skinless
- edamame (green soy beans, cooked)
- eggs or liquid egg substitute
- fish, broiled, baked, or steamed, without sauce
- fish, canned with water, no salt added
- ground meats, moist, lean or extra lean
- meat, trimmed lean
- meatless soy protein products (such as vegetarian ground round) 
- seafood, broiled, baked, or steamed, without sauce
- tofu (soy)

Try with caution (texture)

Tough

- overcooked or reheated meats
- red meat like steaks, roasts or chops, lean

Chewy or rubbery

- melted cheese
- skin of poultry or fish

Choose less often

Milk and alternatives

- 3.25% homogenized milk
- flavoured beverages with added sugar: milk, soy beverage, kefir
- evaporated whole milk
- milkshakes made with ice cream or frozen yogurt
- smoothies with added sugars, juice
- sweetened condensed milk
- cheese, more than 20% M.F.
- cheese spreads
- cream: half & half, whipping cream, coffee cream
- creamy or cheese sauces
- puddings, regular
- soups, higher fat, cream-based
- yogurt with added sugar

Meat and alternatives

- bacon
- chicken wings and fried chicken
- deli or processed sandwich meats
- fried foods
- meat, ground, medium or regular fat
- sausages, smokies, wieners and hot dogs

Caution - Texture

- breaded or coated foods, like chicken strips, cheese sticks, or fish sticks
- casings of sausages
- dried meats, like jerky or pepperoni sticks

Vegetables and Fruit

Choose a variety of vegetables and fruit every day. They provide the fibre, vitamins, and minerals you need.

<p> Choose more often</p> <p>Choose crisp lettuce, like iceberg, hearts of romaine, or shredded cabbage (coleslaw) instead of soft or waxy lettuce leaves.</p>		
<p>Vegetables, fresh, frozen, or canned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artichoke • bean sprouts • beans (green or yellow) • beets • bok choy • Brussels sprouts • cabbage • carrots • cauliflower • eggplant • leeks • lettuce or salad greens that are crisp, like iceberg, hearts of romaine or shredded cabbage (coleslaw) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mushrooms • peppers • pumpkin • radish • salsa • soups, low sodium tomato • tomatoes, fresh • turnips • vegetable tomato sauce, low sodium • vegetable juice, low-sodium  • zucchini 	<p>Fruit fresh, frozen, or canned in water or juice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applesauce, unsweetened • banana • berries • cherries • kiwi • mango • melon • nectarine • peach • pear • plum
<p> Try with caution (texture)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can try peeling vegetables and fruit to make them easier to chew well. • Try eating softer lettuce with crunchy vegetables or protein foods to make the lettuce easier to chew well. 		
<p>Stringy or fibrous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asparagus • broccoli, rapini • celery, raw • grapefruit • green beans • oranges • pineapple • squash, spaghetti 	<p>Soft or waxy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lettuce leaves, soft • kale leaves, raw • spinach, raw <p>Sticky or gummy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dried fruit • fruit leathers 	<p>Firm skin or peel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apples • celery • cherry tomatoes • cucumber • grapes
<p> Choose less often</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit canned in syrup (light or regular) • dried fruit or fruit leathers • juice, unsweetened; limit to ½ cup (125 mL) a day • tomato juice, vegetable cocktail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vegetable soups, creamy, higher fat • vegetables in sweet or creamy sauces • vegetables, battered or fried, including French fries and hash browns 	

Grain Products and Starchy Foods

Grains and starchy foods give you carbohydrates for energy, as well as fibre and protein.

Choose more often

- Choose whole grain and higher fibre foods more often. Read labels and look for foods with at least 2 grams of fibre per serving.
- Toast breads to make them crisper and easier to chew well. You can try pita to make wraps or use crispbreads to make an open-faced sandwich.
- Mix rice, noodles, or pasta with vegetables and protein to make them easier to chew. Try small amounts at first.

<p>Grains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bread, whole grain, toasted • cereal, hot or cold, unsweetened or higher protein • cooked whole grains, like oats, cracked wheat, barley, millet, bulgur, quinoa, wild or brown rice • crackers, lower fat and higher fibre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bannock, baked • crispbreads, whole grain or rye • English muffin, toasted • pita, whole wheat • granola bar, oatmeal, crisp, higher fibre 	<p>Starchy Vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beans, lentils or chickpeas, dried and cooked or canned • corn • hummus • mushrooms, shitake • parsnips • peas, green • plantain • potato • squash: acorn, butternut, or Hubbard • sweet potato or yam
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Try with caution (texture)

<p>Soft and doughy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breads or buns, soft, fluffy-type • steamed buns like bao • breads or buns, not toasted • flat breads, soft: tortilla, naan, roti, or chapati • French toast  • muffins • pancakes  • pizza crust  	<p>Hard or tough to chew well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bagels (dense) • breads or granola with nuts or dried fruits (like raisin bread)  • popcorn 	<p>Sticky or gummy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dumplings, like pot stickers, wonton, gyoza or perogy • pasta or noodles • rice, white or sticky • protein or energy bars 
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Choose less often

- cereals or granola, sweetened, with dried fruit
- cereal bars, dipped or chewy-style
- croissants and Danishes
- digestive biscuits
- graham crackers
- melba toast
- popcorn, movie-style, caramel corn, or with added fat, salt or sugar
- rice cakes
- snack crackers, pretzels and crisps
- taco shells, hard
- waffles, crisp

Oils and Fats

Choose small amounts of the healthier oils and fats from the *Choose more often* group. All oils and fats are higher in calories. Nuts and seeds have some protein that can help you meet your protein needs.

● Choose more often		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oils: canola, olive, peanut, safflower, sunflower, walnut, soy, corn, flaxseed salad dressings, made with the oils above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> avocado margarine, non-hydrogenated mayonnaise, light olives 	Oils and Fats with protein <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hemp seed hearts nuts and seeds nut butters or seed butters
<p>▼</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most people don't have a problem with the texture of most oils and fats after surgery. Some people may have stomach upset, cramping, or diarrhea if they eat too much oils and fat. 		
⬮ Choose less often		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bacon butter or lard margarine, hard or block style, vegetable shortening coconut or palm oil coconut milk or cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coffee whitener, non-dairy cream: half & half, whipping cream, coffee cream creamy sauces fried foods store-bought baked products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> snack foods like chips mayonnaise, regular fat gravy

Extras

Extras are condiments and snack-type foods.

● Choose smaller portions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cream cheese, low fat or fat-free frozen pops, sugar-free gelatin desserts, sugar-free herbs and spices, pepper, seasoning mixes with no salt added pickles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lemon juice vinegars horseradish mustard  sugar substitutes sour cream, 1% M.F., fat-free sauces: chili, fish, soy, Worcestershire, hot sauces  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sweet condiments: no more than 2 Tbsp (30 mL) of honey, ketchup, relish, and sauces (barbeque, cranberry, oyster, steak, sweet and sour, tartar, teriyaki) 
⬮ Choose less often		
<p>You may be able to tolerate some of these foods after surgery, but they are less healthy choices.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chips: potato, nacho, corn, taco, tortilla candies chocolate cookies cream cheese, light or regular ice cream, sherbet, or frozen yogurt jams and jellies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pies pretzels sweet desserts: cakes, pies, cookies, squares sour cream, 5% M.F. or more sugar, syrups, or molasses trail mix (nuts, dried fruit, chocolate bits) 	<p>▼ Caution - Texture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sticky or gummy snacks, like marshmallows, gummy candies, jellybeans soft and doughy desserts: cake, cupcakes, donuts, Danishes

Drinks

Tips:

- Drink water throughout the day.
- Choose drinks that are calorie-free (5 calories or less in a serving).
- Avoid drinks with bubbles (carbonated) such as pop, mineral water, and beer

Separate solids and liquids

- Don't drink with meals or snacks.
- Wait 30 minutes after eating solid food before drinking.
- Sip on fluids between meals.

Caffeine

- Have no more than 400 mg caffeine each day. This is about 2–3 cups of coffee (1 cup is 8 oz or 250 mL). Coffee-based drinks, colas, tea, and energy drinks also contain caffeine.

Alcohol

- Bariatric surgery changes how alcohol affects you, and alcohol is higher in calories. Talk to your healthcare team about whether alcohol after bariatric surgery is right for you.

 Choose more often	
For information on milk or fortified soy beverages, see the <i>Protein Foods</i> list.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water • milk, skim or 1%, unsweetened • milk, lactose-reduced, skim or 1%, unsweetened • soy beverages, fortified, unsweetened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sugar-free or zero calorie drinks or drink mixes with no bubbles (not carbonated) • coffee and tea, unsweetened or with a sugar substitute
 Choose less often	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcohol • coffee and tea drinks with added sugar, hot or cold • coffee whitener, non-dairy • energy drinks • flat pop with added sugar • fruit flavoured crystals, fruity drinks • iced tea with added sugar • juice, unsweetened; limit to ½ cup (125 mL) a day • lemonade with added sugar • milkshakes • slushes • smoothies with added sugar or fat 	 Caution - Texture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drinks with solid pieces like bubble tea, or drinks with fruit chunks

