

Eating Well after Stomach Surgery

This handout tells you how stomach (gastric) surgery may affect your diet.

There are two types of stomach surgery:

1. partial gastrectomy: part of the stomach is removed
2. total gastrectomy: the entire stomach is removed

The stomach is a storage space for food. When part or all of the stomach is removed, there is less storage space. You may feel full quickly and only be able to eat small amounts at a time. You may have trouble staying at or gaining back your weight.

Tips to eat well after stomach surgery

The ideas below may help you eat well after stomach surgery:

- Enjoy a variety of foods based on Canada's Food Guide to get all the nutrients that you need to heal from surgery.
- Eat small amounts more often. Eat five to six small meals per day.
- Eat slowly, chew food well, and relax during meals
- Start with soft, easy to chew, bland foods.
- Slowly increase the amount of food you eat at each meal. Over time, your stomach and/or small bowel will stretch and you will be able to eat more.
- Have protein with your meals. Some foods that are high in protein are:
 - beans, peas, and lentils
 - fish
 - smooth peanut butter
 - cheese
 - meat
 - tofu
 - cottage cheese
 - milk
 - yogurt
 - poultry
 - eggs

- Drink liquids 30 minutes before or 30 minutes after you eat solid food. Try not to drink during meals or snacks so that you don't feel full quickly.
- If you have diarrhea, drink lots of liquids. The foods below may help add bulk to your stool:
 - applesauce
 - oatmeal
 - smooth peanut butter
 - bananas
 - rice
 - tapioca
 - barley
 - pasta
 - potatoes
 - yogurt
 - bread
 - cheese
- Everyone is different. A food that bothers one person may not bother someone else.
- Write down all of the foods you eat and drink, and your symptoms. This may help you to figure out which foods cause problems for you.

Dumping syndrome

- Some people have dumping syndrome after surgery. This happens when food enters the small bowel too fast. You may feel dizzy or faint, and your heart may start to beat faster.
- Reduce the amount of sugary foods you eat, such as:
 - cake
 - jam
 - sugar
 - candy
 - jelly
 - sweetened juices
 - cookies
 - pop
 - syrup
 - ice cream
- If you need nutrition supplement drinks for extra calories and protein, use those with less sugar, like Glucerna[®], Carnation Breakfast Essentials[®] No Sugar Added, or Boost Diabetic[®].
- If you have a problem with dumping syndrome, limit your activity after meals. It may help to lie down for 20 to 30 minutes after meals.
- Ask your healthcare provider for more information.

Keep track of your weight

- Weigh yourself each week and write it down.
- If you are losing weight, eat more at your usual meals and/or eat more often. You can also drink nutrition supplement drinks like Ensure® or Ensure Plus®.
- If you have problems with eating or if you are losing weight, speak with your doctor and ask to see a dietitian.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

- Your stomach is now smaller or it has been removed. You may not be able to absorb some nutrients from food as well as you did before. You need to take a chewable or liquid multivitamin and mineral supplement every day.
- Some people need extra vitamins and minerals after surgery. Ask your healthcare provider if you need more of any of the vitamins and minerals below:
 - calcium as calcium citrate
 - folic acid
 - iron
 - vitamin B₁₂
 - vitamin D

Sample Day Meal Plan

The sample day meal plan below can help you get started eating after stomach surgery. Over time, slowly add different foods to your meals. Your serving sizes can slowly increase as your appetite improves.

Breakfast

- 1 boiled egg
- 1 slice toast
- 1 tsp (5 mL) margarine
- 1 tsp (5 mL) jam

Morning Snack

- ½ cup (125 mL) canned fruit
- 1 oz (30 g) cheese

Lunch

- ½ sandwich with a soft filling such as tuna, egg, or chicken
- ½ cup (125 mL) well-cooked vegetables
- 1 soft fruit (like banana or kiwi)
- ¾ cup (175 mL) yogurt

Afternoon Snack

- 2 to 4 soda crackers
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) smooth peanut butter

Dinner

- 2½ oz (75 g) soft meat, poultry, or fish
- ½ cup (125 mL) well-cooked vegetables
- 1 small potato or ½ cup (125 mL) of cooked rice or pasta
- 1 tsp (5 mL) margarine
- ½ cup (125 mL) soft fruit

Evening Snack

- ¾ cup (175 mL) pudding or yogurt
- 2 plain cookies

Between Meals and Snacks

Tea, coffee, milk, unsweetened juice, water, and nutrition supplement drinks