

# A young person's guide to eating and drinking following spinal and other surgery



## Recovery: How to help yourself

**Eating and drinking well after an operation will speed up and improve your recovery. Your body needs enough fuel (nutrition) to mend (repair) itself after the operation.**

After surgery the movement of the digestive system (gut) is slower than usual because of:

- The medicines used during and after the operation
- The way the body recovers
- The position you are in and the limited amount of movement you can do

Constipation and feeling sick are both common side effects. These can be made worse by not drinking and eating enough when you are recovering.

## Tips

**The following tips have been found to be helpful.**

Help yourself recover by:



- ✓ **Taking the laxative** (to help you go to the toilet) and anti-sickness medicines prescribed. There is more than one type of medicine so if one does not help you, please let the medical team know

**Continued overleaf**



- ✓ **Prune juice** is a natural laxative available on the Children and Adolescent Unit; some like this better if it is mixed with apple juice
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- ✓ **Have a drink of hot water** early in the morning before breakfast, try this with some squash. Spread your drinks out, aim for six to eight glasses over the day
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- ✓ **Chewing sugar free chewing gum** (this can be any flavour - mint or fruit) for at least 30 minutes three times a day can help distract you from pain and move the digestive system (gut). It is good for your teeth and safe for children over five years of age. Avoid if you have any chewing or swallowing difficulties
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- ✓ **Massage your stomach** in a clockwise rotation (circular movement) this can be comforting and helpful.
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- ✓ **Eat small meals and nourishing snacks** in between. If you are finding it very difficult to eat, please ask for a Build Up milk shake. This can be taken in addition to your meals or to replace them. The nurse or ward hostess can offer these to you.
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