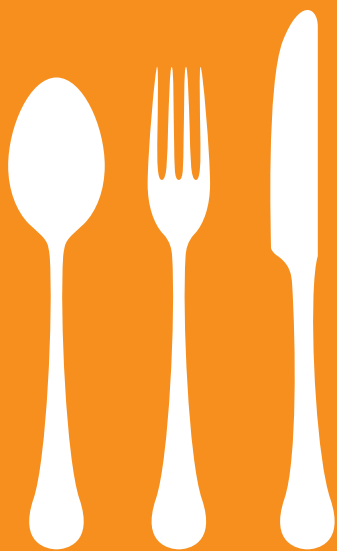


A patient's guide to eating well while in hospital



This booklet will provide you with tips and suggestions to improve your nutrition following your recent procedure. Good nutrition following surgery has been shown to reduce complications, improve the healing of wounds, maintain your muscle strength and reduce the time you need to stay in hospital.

Eating enough food following surgery can sometimes be difficult due to feeling sick (nauseous), constipated, in pain or in an unfamiliar environment. You may also be confined to your bed in a flat position, or have a piece of equipment or plaster cast made for you, which can make the action of swallowing, eating and feeding more difficult to do. Depending on the type of operation you have had, your gut may slow down and you may have no appetite or feel full all the time.

While you may not feel like eating and drinking after an operation or recovering from an infection, this is the time when the body burns up more energy (calories) and protein than normal in order to repair itself.

The following suggestions will help you eat and drink better and improve your recovery:

- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day. Instead of just having breakfast, lunch and dinner, try to include in-between snacks or drinks for morning and afternoon tea and an evening snack.
- Choose the high energy/high protein foods from the menu. These are labelled with a ? sign. If you are not able to eat all of your meal, try to eat the protein foods first and then some of the other foods such as potatoes, pasta and rice.

- High protein foods include meat, chicken, fish, eggs, beans and lentils. Dairy foods such as milky drinks, cheese, yoghurt, custard and milky puddings are also good sources of protein and these should be taken in-between meals.



- **Hint:** Remember, if your body doesn't receive enough protein from the food we eat, the body steals protein from the muscles. This can be from the muscles in the arms and legs but also important muscles used in breathing and circulation, such as the heart and lungs.
- Lite Bites are smaller-sized menu choices that are ideal when you first start to eat after your surgery. Once your appetite returns, it is important to choose larger meals from the menu.
- Avoid drinking too much with mealtimes as the liquid might fill up your stomach instead of the food. Take drinks after or in-between meals.
- Try to drink nourishing drinks such as milk, juices and full sugar squash or soft drinks which have much more energy in them than water, tea and coffee. Milk based drinks also contain protein.

The nurse or ward hostess can offer you a nutritional supplement called Build Up Shake which is a milkshake fortified with vitamins, minerals and has a high protein intake. It can be offered in-between meals or as a bedtime drink.

Most soups are generally low in energy and protein and are not suitable as a meal replacement following surgery, but a high protein soup can be requested from your ward hostess.

If you are really struggling to eat and drink anything, the nurse can refer you to a dietitian. The dietitian can offer you advice, suggest other foods or offer nutrition supplements to help boost your energy levels.

If you find you fill up quickly at mealtimes, ask the ward hostess for extra foods such as cold desserts, biscuits, sandwiches or cheese and crackers that can be eaten as snacks in-between meals.

Don't be afraid to ask for help with your meal especially if you have trouble cutting up your food, opening packets or feeding yourself. The nurse or healthcare assistant can help you at mealtimes.

If you are feeling sick or nauseous

This is a common side-effect after an operation. The doctors may be able to give you medication to prevent you feeling sick. This should be taken 30-60 minutes before a meal to allow your stomach to settle before your meal arrives.

- If you find that the smell of the cooked food is causing you to feel sick, try to order cold foods such as sandwiches, salads and cold desserts without strong smells.
- Try sipping flat fizzy drinks such as cola or lemonade which can help with sickness.
- Foods with ginger have been known to have anti-sickness properties. You could try fresh ginger, biscuits, tea or flat non-alcoholic ginger beer/ale. Ask someone to bring these foods and drinks in from home.
- Keeping your mouth fresh by brushing your teeth regularly or using a mouthwash is important to prevent bacteria growing in your mouth and to encourage you to eat.
- Eating small amounts regularly throughout the day is more likely to prevent nausea than over-eating or going without food for long periods.
- When first starting to eat after feeling sick, you may like to try foods such as crackers, toast, sandwiches, crisps or savoury items rather than heavier meals.

If you are constipated

This is another common side effect after an operation. Often analgesia (pain medication) can cause you to become constipated. It is important to tell the doctors if you feel constipated so that they can give you the correct medication to help relieve this.

Being constipated can prevent you from eating and drinking, so helping your bowels move may increase your appetite and prevent nausea.

- Drinking plenty of fluid throughout the day can stimulate your bowels to move. Most people will require at least six to eight glasses of fluid per day (1.5-2.0 litres of fluid per day).
- Taking laxative medications may be needed to soften the stools, stimulate your bowel muscles or add extra bulk or liquid to your stools.
- Changing your position from lying in bed to sitting in a more upright position or moving around (if able to) may help to stimulate your bowels.

After you leave the hospital

Once discharged home, you are still likely to be in the 'recovering phase' of your operation. You still need to eat high energy and protein rich foods, snacks in-between meals and take nourishing drinks at home until your normal strength returns. When you make a full recovery, you can return to your normal dietary pattern.

High energy/protein meals include:

- Roast meats/chicken with potatoes, vegetables and gravy
- Sausages and cheesy mash with green vegetables
- Jacket potatoes with tuna mayo, cheese, baked beans or savoury mince
- Protein filled sandwiches – prawn, chicken, cheese, egg, fish, ham
- Lasagne, spaghetti bolognaise or macaroni cheese
- Omelette with ham, cheese and vegetables
- Cooked breakfast of bacon, sausages, eggs, mushrooms and hash browns
- Salmon in parsley sauce with chipped potatoes and vegetables
- Chickpea curry with fried rice and chapatti or naan bread
- Shepherd's or cottage pie with vegetables
- Noodles with seafood/meat and vegetables in rich sauce with rice



If your appetite has still not returned to normal, try five to six small meals or drinks per day instead.

Suitable snacks include:

- Sausage rolls, mini quiches or fish bites
- Cheese, nuts, olives, dips and crackers
- Baked beans on toast
- Nibble platter including cold cuts of meat, chicken, tinned fish and dry biscuits
- Poached egg or cheese on toast
- Crumpets with butter/margarine, cream cheese, jam and honey
- Sausage sandwich or hot dog with cheese
- Fruit salad with full fat custard, yoghurt or ice-cream
- Crème caramel, full fat fromage frais, rice pudding or mousse
- Fruit smoothie with yoghurt
- Hot drinks – hot chocolate, milky coffee, Horlicks or Ovaltine
- Cold drinks – milkshakes, malted milk, thick-shakes

Fortified milk

You can make your own fortified milk drink at home with simple ingredients.

Try adding two tablespoons of dried milk powder to a glass of full cream milk and mix thoroughly. This milk can be used on cereal, in soups, mashed potato, custard or in other recipes and provides your body with extra energy and protein.

Single recipe

½ pint full cream milk
2 tablespoons dried milk powder
Mix thoroughly

Larger recipe

1 pint full cream milk
4 tablespoons dried milk powder
Mix thoroughly

Try using this milk to make fruit smoothies, milkshakes or bedtime drinks. To flavour, use fresh or tinned fruit, ice-cream, vanilla essence, drinking chocolate, Crusha syrups, Nesquik powder, Horlicks etc. Dried milk powder is found in most supermarkets, usually on the shelves close to the tea and coffee section.



Are you overweight?

Remember even if you are overweight before the operation, after surgery is not the time to lose weight. It is better to eat normally until you fully recover before addressing your weight issue.

Websites you can look at to help you lose weight include:

www.nhs.uk/livewell/goodfood

www.bdaweightwise.com

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life

If you have any comments about this leaflet, please contact the Nutrition and Dietetic Department on 020 8909 5456.

Your notes

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