

Your New Life After Laparoscopic Weight Loss Surgery

The surgery you have had helps you to lose weight by reducing the amount your stomach can hold, however this will only work if you make permanent changes to your lifestyle.

You are still 100% in control of what you put in your mouth. Therefore you need to adopt a healthy eating plan if you are going to get the best results from your surgery.

After surgery it is important to have a well balanced diet to ensure you receive adequate nourishment whilst losing weight and becoming fitter.

Initially after surgery and gastric band adjustment, you may find it more difficult to eat, and lose a lot of weight quickly. However as your diet improves, the rate of weight loss will slow down to approximately 1 to 2 pounds a week. Your weight loss is likely to be faster after gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy. This will be fat loss only. If you lose weight at a faster rate than this, you will be losing muscle as well as fat, and if this continues for a long period, you will feel weak and you will not attain all of the health benefits of weight loss.

The following information is to give you guidance.

WEEKS 1 - 2

Immediately after the operation, you will have a drip to give you fluids to make sure you do not become dehydrated, and once the Surgeon is happy with your progress will be allowed sips of water. This is usually later on the day of surgery.

If you remain well you will be able to progress to free fluids.

If you have had a gastric band, it will not have been inflated at this stage, as it needs time for the skin around it to heal and for the band to remain firmly in place. The other surgical procedures will also have stitches around the new stomach that will need time to heal.

To allow for adequate healing, it is recommended that you remain **on a liquid diet for two weeks**. If you were to eat a solid diet during this early post-operative period, this can put stress and pressure on the stomach stitches, leading to failure of the operation.

It is important that you drink at **least 2 litres of fluid per day**, so that you do not become dehydrated. You will need more fluid than this if the weather is very hot.

It is important that you take a variety of different fluids to widen the range of nutrients you receive. Varying the fluids will also help prevent you getting bored with the diet. A selection of suitable drinks is listed below.

You will also need to take an iron and vitamin supplement for at least 6 months. It is recommended that nutritional supplements are continued long term following gastric bypass surgery. These may be prescribed by your doctor or brought over the counter at the pharmacy.

Suitable Fluids

Choose one of these to have at mealtimes:

Build up soups - strained

Build up shakes

Complan soups - strained

Complan shake

Soup (tinned or homemade) - strained with 2 tablespoons of dried milk powder

Slimfast soup - strained

Slimfast shakes

Other Fluids

Milk

Fruit juice (only 1 small glass a day)

It is best to sip fluids slowly during the day to prevent fullness and discomfort. As time goes on you will find that you can drink slightly more and slightly faster.

WEEKS 3 - 4

You will be ready to start having thicker foods to help you progress to a solid diet. Softer foods will be easier to manage at this stage. Many people find it helpful to liquidise or blend their meals. The texture you should aim for should be similar to thin porridge or mashed potatoes with plenty of gravy. You will only be able to manage a very small amount to start with but this will increase in time. Remember to take time over your meals and chew well. Meal times will take longer than before. Stop eating as soon as you start to feel full.

Suitable foods include:

Cereals

½ Weetabix, or small bowl of porridge, or shreddies, cornflakes (soak well with semi-skimmed milk to a soft consistency)

Diet yoghurt

Scrambled or boiled eggs.

Savoury foods

Mashed potato with milk or gravy

Pasta/rice blended with sauce

Mashed vegetables

Meats blended with gravy or sauce

Fish blended with sauce

Boneless fish e.g. salmon, tuna

Tender/minced meat or poultry

Stews and casseroles—must contain only very small pieces of meat

Corned beef hash, shepherds pie.

Suitable foods for your soft diet

Examples of suitable soft foods:

Macaroni

Well-cooked pasta

Thick soup

Baked potato without the skin

Cottage cheese/grated cheese

Baked beans

Vegetables:

Vegetables require mashing or cooking until soft.

Potatoes can be mashed, boiled or baked (remove all skins)

Desserts:

Custard - low sugar, low fat
Rice pudding - low sugar, low fat
Sago, made with semi-skimmed milk
Ice cream - diet
Diet mousse
Diet yoghurt
Angel delight/blancmange - made with semi-skimmed milk

Fruit:

Choose fruits that have a soft texture eg banana, pear or peach
Fruit such as apples can be stewed
Remove all skins and seeds from fruit before serving.

Additional Items:

Fruit juice, limit to 1 glass (100-200mls) per day
Pureed fruit
½ yoghurt

In addition it would be beneficial to have 1 pint of semi-skimmed milk throughout the day in drinks, sauces or with cereals.

Remember to drink between meals and not at meal times, and avoid fizzy drinks, as these will cause discomfort.

You will not need to puree/blend all foods now but it will still be beneficial for you to eat softer foods.

BY WEEK 5

You should try introducing more solid textures.

You may struggle with some foods at first such as fresh bread and you may find it easier to manage crisp breads or crackers. If you have beans or cottage cheese on your toast it will make the toast softer. Meat may also be difficult to manage so cut it small and try casseroles, mincing and stewing meat to soften it and remember to chew the meat thoroughly.

You should still try to manage 1 pint of semi-skimmed milk a day in drinks and on cereals etc. Remember to drink only low calorie drinks. If you drink liquids

that are high in calories, you will lose little weight even if you otherwise follow your diet.

It will still take you longer to eat meals and you may come across foods that you cannot manage, therefore avoid these foods for a time and try to reintroduce them after a few weeks.

Eventually you will find that you can eat larger portions, this is quite normal. It is important that you increase the right types of foods, for example, if you feel hungry try increasing the cereals, fruits and vegetables in your diet and you may need to increase your portion sizes at mealtimes.

Unfortunately, snacks such as crisps and chocolate are very easy to eat even after surgery so you will need to have willpower. Some gastric bypass patients feel sick and faint after eating sweets and chocolates. This is known as dumping and can help patients to avoid these particular foods. However, losing weight even with the help of surgery is still hard work. As you lose weight though, you will feel the benefits.

You should now be eating normal, healthy foods. The surgery will help you to eat less and reduce hunger pangs during the day. You are more likely to be successful with your surgery if you:

- eat 2-3 regular meals a day
- plan a healthy snack if you know your next meal will be delayed
- eat slowly and chew carefully
- avoid drinks ½ hour before and after meals
- limit alcohol to 1-2 glasses per week
- avoid biscuits, chocolates, sweets, crisps, soft cheese, peanut butter, fruit juices
- exercise regularly (30 minutes, 5 times per week).

If you find you have to blend food, are struggling to drink, feel dizzy or vomit more than 1-2 times per week, these are not normal after weight loss surgery and should not be left unattended. Please contact the local bariatric team straight away if you experience any of these problems or have concerns that your surgery is not going according to plan.