

Your Diet after Gastrectomy

A gastrectomy removes part or all of the stomach. This can affect how your body digests food. You may feel full quickly, have heartburn, or other uncomfortable symptoms. Poor appetite and decreased food intake can lead to weight loss and vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Follow the tips in this handout to help prevent unwanted weight loss and to manage discomfort after your surgery.

General Guidelines

Eat small, frequent meals

Aim for 6-8 small, well-balanced meals each day. Focus on small portion sizes such as 1-2 ounces of meat, 1/2 cup of dairy, 1/2 cup of starchy foods, and either a 1/2 cup of vegetables or a 1/2 cup of fruit per meal. Eat slowly and chew your food well to help with digestion.

Make protein a priority

Eat protein-rich foods with each meal. Protein is important for wound healing after surgery and helps maintain muscle mass. High protein foods include eggs, meat, poultry, fish, milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, tofu, soy products, and smooth nut butters. If your appetite is low, try to eat protein-rich foods first.

You may add a high-protein, low-sugar nutritional supplement drink. Aim for under 5 grams of sugar per serving.

Good options include:

Ensure MAX, Boost Glucose Control, Premier Protein, Orgain Protein Shake
Protein powder added to foods and beverages

Choose soft, well-cooked foods

Eat soft foods that are easy to digest. Chew foods well. Limit raw fruits and vegetables, and high fiber starches for the first 6-8 weeks after surgery. Then as tolerated, slowly add back foods higher in fiber to your diet.

Separate liquids from meals

Drink liquids 30-60 minutes before or after meals, not with meals. Limit liquid foods such as soup and broth. Gelatin and ice cream melt when eaten, so they count as liquids and should not be eaten with meals.

Maintain hydration

Hydrating fluids include water, milk or non-dairy alternatives, caffeine-free teas, and sugar-free beverages. Drink small amounts at a time. Aim for a total of 8 cups of fluid per day.

Monitor for weight loss

If you are having trouble maintaining your weight, include more fat-containing foods as tolerated. High calorie choices include avocados, oils, nut butters, mayonnaise, and salad dressings. You may also need additional snacks.

Tame your sweet tooth

Limit sugar, concentrated sweets, and sugar alcohols. This includes foods and beverages such as sugary desserts, pastries, ice cream, candy, sodas, and fruit juices. Limit table sugar, brown sugar, honey, syrup, and jams. Avoid foods made with mannitol, sorbitol, and high fructose corn syrup. Read the ingredients lists on food labels and limit these items to minimize dumping syndrome.

What is Dumping Syndrome?

Dumping Syndrome occurs when food passes too quickly from the stomach to the intestine. This rapid transit causes discomfort. High sugar foods or drinking fluids with meals can cause your stomach to empty faster and cause dumping syndrome. Early dumping syndrome occurs 10-30 minutes after eating. Symptoms include fullness, nausea, vomiting, bloating, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. Late dumping syndrome occurs 1-3 hours after meals. The result may be hunger, anxiety, sweating, and difficulty concentrating.

What about Fat Malabsorption?

Removing part or all of your stomach can cause fat malabsorption. Signs of fat malabsorption include loose, oily, floating or foul-smelling stools. If you malabsorb fat, your doctor may prescribe enzyme pills to help you digest your food. It is important to take your enzymes as directed with each of your meals and snacks.

Foods to choose and foods to limit

The table on the next page lists foods to try and foods to avoid for the first 6-8 weeks after surgery. After 6-8 weeks, you may try small portions from the **Foods to Avoid** list. Continue to limit sweets.

- Focus on softer foods that are easier to digest.
- Eat foods low in fiber with under 2 grams of fiber per serving.
- If you notice you are lactose intolerant, limit your dairy intake.
- For lactose intolerance try lactose-free milk or fortified milk replacements.

Food Choices for the First 6-8 weeks after Surgery

Food Group	Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Grains	White bread, cream of wheat, oatmeal, white rice, tortillas, crackers, pasta, biscuits, unsweetened cereals	Whole grain breads, brown rice, whole wheat tortillas, whole wheat pasta, whole grain crackers, popcorn
Fruits	Soft, peeled, fruits without seeds, bananas, melons, applesauce, peaches, pears, nectarines, mango	Fresh fruits with stringy flesh, skins, and seeds such as apples, berries, oranges, grapes, plums, papaya, pineapple, dried fruit
Vegetables	Soft, well-cooked, vegetables such as carrots, green beans, eggplant, squash, peeled potatoes or yams, avocado, peeled tomatoes, tomato sauce, winter squash, pureed vegetables	Raw, fibrous, tough, or stringy cooked vegetables such as corn, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bamboo shoots, celery, cabbage, cauliflower, peppers, leafy greens, spinach, artichokes, peas, parsnips, radishes
Meats, Protein	Tender, well-cooked or ground meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, tofu, smooth nut butters	Tough or chewy meats, legumes such as dried beans and lentils, nuts and seeds
Dairy	Milk, unsweetened soy or almond milk, cheese, plain or unsweetened yogurt	Chocolate milk, sweetened or fruit flavored yogurts
Sweets	Sugar-free pudding and gelatin, unsweetened juices, vanilla wafers, graham crackers	Foods and beverages sweetened with sugar, corn syrup, maple syrup, honey, sorbitol or mannitol

Vitamins and Minerals

After a gastrectomy, absorption and digestion of some nutrients are impaired. You are at risk for vitamin B12, folic acid, iron, calcium, and vitamin D deficiencies.

- Vitamin D and calcium deficiencies increases the risk of osteoporosis.
- Vitamin B12, folic acid, and iron are needed to produce healthy blood cells.

Ask your doctor to annually screen your levels with these test

- B12 labs: methylmalonic acid and homocysteine
- 25 OH vitamin D
- Iron and ferritin
- DEXA bone density scan

In addition to a well-balanced diet, include a chewable multivitamin with minerals daily and 500 - 1,000 mcg vitamin B12 (methylcobalamin or cyanocobalamin).

Include these nutrient-rich foods in your diet:

Vitamin B12	Folic acid	Iron	Calcium	Vitamin D
Eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, meats, fish, poultry, fortified cereal	Fortified cereals and grains, leafy vegetables, spinach, eggs, legumes	Red meat, clams, fish, chicken, soy, egg yolks, enriched grains and cereals	Milk, cheese, yogurt, kale, collards, bok choy, broccoli, fortified soy or almond milk	Oily fish, eggs, cheese, fortified milk, mushrooms

Sample Menu Ideas

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	2 scrambled eggs 1/4 cup cooked oatmeal 1/2 cup milk or unsweetened soy milk	1/4 cup dry cereal 1/2 cup milk or unsweetened soy milk with ½ scoop protein powder	1 slice white toast, smooth peanut butter 1/2 banana 1/2 cup milk or unsweetened soy milk
Snack	1/4 cup yogurt	1 ounce string cheese	1/2 cup applesauce
Lunch	1 slice white bread 2 ounces sliced turkey 1 slice cheese 1/4 cup canned pears 1/2 cup tea, no caffeine	2 ounces baked chicken 1/4 cup cooked white rice 1/4 cup cooked squash 1/2 cup water	2 ounces fish 1/4 cup cooked pasta 1/4 cup carrots, well-cooked 1/2 cup water
Snack	1 pita bread 2 tablespoons hummus	1 cup nutritional supplement drink	1/4 cup tuna 4 saltine crackers
Dinner	2 ounces baked pork 1/4 cup mashed potatoes 1/4 cup green beans 1/2 cup milk	1/4 cup pasta with tomato sauce 2 ounces ground turkey 1/4 cup asparagus tips 1/2 cup water	1 hamburger bun 2 ounce beef patty 2 slices of avocado 1/2 cup pulp-free vegetable juice
Snack	1 cup nutrition supplement drink	1/4 cup canned peaches	1/4 cup canned fruit cocktail

Highlights:

- Drink a total of 8 cups of fluid per day.
- Limit 1/2 cup fluid portions with meals.
- Have up to one cup of fluid at a time between meals.
- Increase portion sizes of foods gradually and as tolerate

