Esophageal Diet After Surgery

**Nutrition guidelines**

This handout gives eating guidelines for patients who have had surgery involving their esophagus.

**Eating After Your Surgery**

Your recent surgery involved your esophagus (the tube that carries food and drink from your mouth to your stomach). The surgery may have caused swelling in your lower esophagus, which can make it harder for food to go down.

For at least the first 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery, you will be on a Soft Esophageal Diet. This means you will be able to eat and drink only soft, moist foods.

Follow the guidelines in this handout to make sure you get enough calories and nutrients to heal well.

**Getting Started**

During your hospital stay after surgery, you will start with a Clear Liquid Diet, then move to a Full Liquid Diet. You will eat and drink clear and full liquids such as broth, tea, water, gelatin, milk, yogurt, pudding, ice cream, milkshakes, creamy soups, and protein drinks.

When you leave the hospital, you should be ready to start the Soft Esophageal Diet. If you find that moist, soft, solid foods are too hard to swallow, or you have nausea and abdominal discomfort after eating, go back to the Full Liquid Diet. When you are ready, try eating moist, soft foods again.

**For Best Results**

- **Eat and drink slowly.**
- Stop eating when you feel full.
- Instead of eating 3 large meals, eat 5 to 6 small meals a day. At first, you may be able to eat only about ½ cup of food at a time.
- Cut your food into small pieces and chew it well.
• Keep foods moist with sauces, broth, or gravy.
• Between meals, drink 8 to 10 cups of liquid each day (1 cup = 8 ounces).
• Focus on eating high-calorie, high-protein foods. You need enough calories, protein, and nutrients for wound healing, to maintain your weight, and to prevent muscle loss.
• After discharge, if you keep losing weight for longer than 1 week, call your dietitian or diet technician.

### Soft Esophageal Diet for Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>OK to Eat and Drink</th>
<th>Do NOT Eat or Drink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meats and Other Proteins</strong>&lt;br&gt;(2 to 3 oz. portions)&lt;br&gt;<em>Chop meat into pea-sized pieces and add sauce, broth or gravy for moisture.</em></td>
<td>Tender moist fish, baby shrimp, crab, lobster, poultry; ground meat with gravy or sauces; meat loaf, meat balls, canned chicken breast, deli turkey, deli ham; tuna, cottage cheese, tofu; soft-cooked or scrambled eggs, sliced hard boiled or deviled eggs; moist casseroles with finely ground or chopped meat; tuna or egg salad with allowed ingredients; moist macaroni and cheese, plain or flavored yogurt; thinly sliced or melted cheese</td>
<td>Clams, mussels, oysters, prawns, roast beef, pork or lamb, ribs, steak or chops; salami, pastrami, hot dogs, sausage, bacon*; casseroles with rice or other grains, crunchy casseroles, cheese cubes, sandwiches, peanut butter (OK in smoothies), other nut butters, yogurt with fruit chunks, pizza <strong>OK to eat meats if they are pureed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Breads and Cereals</strong></td>
<td>Cooked cereal or dry cereal moistened with milk; cream of wheat, cream of rice, instant oats, instant grits, Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Special K</td>
<td>Breads, rolls, crackers; whole-grain, high-fiber dry or cooked cereals; oatmeal made with old-fashioned or steel-cut oats; cereals with dried fruits, nuts, or seeds (such as Raisin Bran or All-Bran)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Starches</strong></td>
<td>Peeled, well-cooked, moist potatoes, peeled potatoes in sauces; well-cooked pasta in sauce, cut into small pieces; hummus, canned refried beans</td>
<td>Potato chips, potato skins, fried potatoes, rice and other grains, corn, whole beans such as pinto, black, kidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Group</td>
<td>OK to Eat and Drink</td>
<td>Do NOT Eat or Drink</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetables</strong></td>
<td>Vegetable juices; soft, well-cooked vegetables (such as carrots, beets, squash, or green beans) that can be mashed with a fork</td>
<td>Raw or fried vegetables, salad, peas, spinach, celery, gas-forming vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fruits</strong></td>
<td>Fruit juices; cooked or canned fruits without seeds or skin (peaches, pears, mandarin oranges); ripe bananas, melon, mango, papaya</td>
<td>All other fresh, frozen, or dried fruits; cooked or canned fruits with seeds or skins (apples, berries, oranges, pineapple, pomegranate)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Drinks</strong></td>
<td><em>Drink 64 ounces a day</em></td>
<td>Carbonated drinks: soda pop, sparkling water, beer; chia seed drinks</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Soups</strong></td>
<td>Soups made with allowed ingredients that are easy to chew, such as chicken noodle, tomato, blended cream soup, blended split pea soup</td>
<td>Avoid soups with rice, other grains, or large chunks of meat or vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sweets and Snacks</strong></td>
<td>Pudding, custard, ice cream, sherbet, fruit ice, frozen yogurt, gelatin made with allowed foods, popsicles, milkshakes, smoothies, sugar, syrup, honey, jelly, plain chocolate</td>
<td>Cookies, pies, or any dessert with a crust or that contains nuts, coconut, or dried fruit; bread or rice pudding; nuts, shredded coconut, chewy candy such as caramels or licorice; hard candy, pickles, popcorn, sticky foods, spicy foods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fats and Condiments</strong></td>
<td>Butter, margarine, salad dressing, mayonnaise, gravy, sour cream, whipped toppings, coconut oil, olive oil, canola oil, mild spices, ketchup, mustard, barbeque sauce, cream cheese</td>
<td>Chunky condiments such as salad dressings with seeds, fruit, or vegetables; cream cheese with fruit or vegetable pieces</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-made Protein Drinks</strong></td>
<td>Ensure, Boost, Glucerna, Carnation Instant Breakfast, Slimfast</td>
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Boosting Calories

After surgery, your body needs more calories for healing. Most people need an extra 200 to 300 calories a day.

Here are some ways to add calories to your diet:

- Instead of eating 3 large meals a day, eat smaller meals more often, or divide meals in half. For example, have an egg for breakfast and then have some canned fruit and cooked cereal for a midmorning snack.
- Add butter or margarine to hot cereal, eggs, cooked vegetables, mashed potatoes, pasta, and soups.
- Use gravies and sauces on meats and vegetables. You can find a variety of sauce mixes at the grocery store.
- Use sour cream to top fruits, meats, cream soups, and baked potatoes. You can also add sour cream to sauces, scrambled eggs, and omelets.
- Use mayonnaise or salad dressing on meats and eggs.
- Add avocados or mild guacamole to egg dishes, meats, cooked vegetables, or cottage cheese.
- Add whipped cream on top of canned fruit, pudding, or Jell-O.
- Eat cheesecake without the crust.

Boosting Protein

Your body needs extra protein after surgery to help healing. Most men will need 10 or more protein servings a day. Most women will need 8 or more protein servings a day.

One protein serving equals 7 grams of protein. This means that during healing, most men need to eat at least 70 grams of protein a day, and most women need to eat at least 56 grams of protein a day.

This list of high-quality proteins gives the amount in 1 serving (7 grams) of protein:

- 1 oz. cooked fish, poultry, or lean ground meat
- 1 egg or ½ cup liquid egg substitute
- 1 oz. cheese (melted)
- 1 cup milk (skim, 1%, 2%, or whole)
- 1 cup yogurt
- ½ cup canned tuna or salmon
- 1 cup pudding
- 3 oz. tofu
Here are some ways to add protein to your diet:

- Use milk, Fortified Milk (see recipe on page 5), evaporated milk, or cream instead of water for cooking hot cereal. Also use these liquids instead of water to make instant cocoa, canned soup, custard, and pudding (sugar-free as needed).

- Add extra pureed or chopped meat to scrambled eggs, omelets, or soups. For example, add chopped chicken to cream of chicken soup, pureed ham to split pea soup, or ground beef to tomato soup.

- Add chopped, hard-cooked eggs to sauces, soups, casseroles, chicken salad, or tuna salad.

- Add grated cheese to cooked vegetables, sauces, soups, and casseroles.

- Eat a snack of cottage cheese with avocado or canned fruit.

**High-Calorie/High-Protein Drink Recipes**

- You can make these drinks at home to supplement your diet. The flavors may be changed to suit your own tastes.

- If you are lactose intolerant, use soy milk, rice milk, or almond milk instead of cow’s milk.

- You may also use pre-made high-calorie, high-protein drinks.

**Fortified Milk**

*Makes 4 servings, 8 oz. each*

- 1 quart regular whole milk
- 1 cup powdered milk

Blend and chill well. Use in place of regular milk for cooking or in special drinks.

*Per serving:* 265 calories, 18 grams protein (2½ protein servings)

**Breakfast in a Glass**

*10 oz. per serving*

- ½ cup whole milk or Fortified Milk
- ¼ cup orange or pineapple juice
- ¼ cup liquid egg substitute
- ½ banana
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Blend all ingredients.

*Per serving:* With whole milk: 210 calories, 10 grams protein; with Fortified Milk: 270 calories, 15 grams protein (2 protein servings)
**Egg Nog**

*10 oz. per serving*

- 1 cup whole milk or Fortified Milk
- ¼ cup liquid egg substitute
- ½ teaspoon sugar

Blend all ingredients.

*Per serving:* With whole milk: 210 calories, 14 grams protein; with Fortified Milk: 320 calories, 25 grams protein (3½ protein servings)

**High-Protein Shake**

*12 oz. per serving*

- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 cup ice cream
- 1 package Carnation Instant Breakfast

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

*Per serving:* 340 calories, 10 grams protein (1½ protein servings)

**Basic Banana Smoothie**

*1 serving*

- 1 cup vanilla low-fat (2%) yogurt
- 1 frozen banana
- 3 ice cubes

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

*Per serving:* 300 calories, 12 grams protein (2 protein servings)

**Yogurt Shake**

*8 oz. per serving*

- ½ cup whole milk or Fortified Milk
- ¼ cup fruit yogurt
- ¼ cup soft fresh or canned fruit

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

*Per serving:* With whole milk: 225 calories, 8 grams protein (1 protein serving); with Fortified Milk: 310 calories, 13 grams protein (2 protein servings)
Peanut Butter Smoothie

1 serving

- 1 cup 2% low-fat milk
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 frozen banana

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

Per serving: 415 calories, 17 grams protein (2½ protein servings)

Sample Menus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup cooked cereal</td>
<td>1 scrambled egg with 1 oz. cheese added</td>
<td>Fruit smoothie with ½ cup yogurt and blended</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup milk</td>
<td></td>
<td>peaches or banana</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz. thinly sliced turkey breast</td>
<td>½ banana</td>
<td>1 oz. thinly sliced cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup yogurt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup milk pea soup</td>
<td>½ cup tuna casserole</td>
<td>½ cup macaroni and cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 cup milk or fruit juice</td>
<td>1 cup milk or fruit juice</td>
<td>1 cup milk or fruit juice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup applesauce</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 deviled egg</td>
<td>1 pudding cup</td>
<td>6 oz. to 8 oz. yogurt</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dinner</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>½ chicken breast marinated in teriyaki</td>
<td>½ cup pasta with meat sauce</td>
<td>2 oz. meatloaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sauce</td>
<td>1 tablespoon grated parmesan cheese</td>
<td>½ cup mashed potatoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup cooked carrots</td>
<td>½ cup cooked zucchini</td>
<td>1 teaspoon butter or margarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup milk or fruit juice</td>
<td>1 cup milk or fruit juice</td>
<td>1 teaspoon sour cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup milk or fruit juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup cottage cheese</td>
<td>1 can Glucerna or Ensure</td>
<td>½ cup dry cereal or instant oatmeal made with</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup canned fruit</td>
<td></td>
<td>milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup milk or yogurt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Registered Dietitian: ____________________________

Phone: ____________________________