

Bariatric Nutrition Guidance for Abdominal Hernia Repair, Skin Removal, or Joint Replacement

This handout explains what to eat and drink before and after surgery to help your body heal. It includes tips for food, exercise, vitamins, and staying hydrated.

Why Nutrition Matters Before and After Surgery

Eating well before and after surgery helps your body heal faster. A balanced diet supports your immune system and gives your body the nutrients it needs to recover. Good nutrition can help:

- Lower inflammation (swelling inside the body)
- Improve blood sugar balance
- Reduce bruising, swelling, and scarring

Full healing of the surgery area usually takes 8–12 weeks. To get the most benefit, start your healthy pre-surgery eating plan 4–6 weeks before your scheduled procedure.

Exercise Before and After Surgery

Moving your body helps you heal by improving blood flow. After you eat, your blood carries electrolytes, vitamins, minerals, protein, fats, and carbohydrates (carbs) all around your body. Blood flow also helps move extra fluid back to the kidneys, which can reduce *edema* (swelling) and pain.

Before and after surgery:

- Create a daily routine that includes healthy eating and moving your body.
- Before surgery, try to exercise all your muscles so your body is as strong and healthy as possible.
- After surgery, avoid swimming, core (abdomen) exercises, and upper-body exercises.
- Walking is important after surgery and is very helpful for healing.

Your Diet Before Surgery

Start this 4–6 weeks before surgery. The goal during this time is to improve your health while maintaining your weight, unless your care team gives you different instructions.

Eat These Foods

- **Lean protein:** Protein helps your body heal and can help you feel full as you eat less carbohydrates.
 - Choose eggs, chicken, beans, and fish. These provide protein without extra fat.
 - You can use a protein shake to meet your daily protein goal.



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- **Vegetables and fruits:** Fresh or frozen vegetables and fruits contain antioxidants (vitamins that protect cells), including vitamins A, C, and E. These support healing and help your body make *collagen* (a protein that gives skin strength).
 - Choose red and orange vegetables.
 - Try to add leafy greens to every meal.
- **Nuts and seeds:** These provide fiber, healthy fats, protein, and important minerals like magnesium and potassium.
 - Try almonds, peanuts, walnuts, cashews, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, pine nuts, sunflower seeds, chia seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds, sesame seeds, and pumpkin seeds.
- **Healthy plant fats:** These often contain anti-inflammatory nutrients and vitamin E.
 - Choose oils made from olives, avocados, and nuts.
- **Whole grains and unprocessed carbohydrates:** These provide slow-digesting energy.
 - Eat whole or sprouted grains, which provide fiber and helpful nutrients.

Avoid or Limit These Foods

- **Processed foods:** Added sugars and saturated fats increase inflammation and make blood sugar harder to manage. Avoid chips, candy, packaged snacks, and processed meats.
- **Refined carbohydrates:** White bread, white flour tortillas, white rice, and many breakfast cereals
- **Dairy products:** Dairy can increase inflammation for some people with certain health conditions
 - Dairy is okay in small amounts during this time
 - Avoid dairy with added sugar, such as chocolate milk, sweetened yogurt, and coffee creamer
- **Saturated fats:** Pepperoni, salami, French fries, macaroni and cheese, and fast food
- **Excess salt:** Too much salt can increase *edema* (swelling), especially when you are less active

The Day Before Surgery

When you have *anesthesia* (medicine that puts you to sleep), your stomach must be empty to lower the risk of *aspiration* (breathing food and liquid into the lungs). Anesthesia also slows your intestine movement.

Follow these instructions:

- **Do not eat any solid food for 36 hours before your procedure**, or for the entire day before surgery.
- **Ask your anesthesiologist if it is ok** to drink 2 liquid protein shakes with 30 grams of protein each.
 - Do not use smoothies or blended foods.
- **Drink at least 64 ounces of hydrating liquids**, such as:
 - Water
 - Infused water
 - Decaffeinated herbal tea

Your Diet After Surgery

For 8–12 weeks after surgery, follow the same eating plan as before surgery, with extra focus on protein.

- Add a protein shake if you are not hungry or cannot eat enough.
- Your protein goal is 80–100 grams per day.

Staying Hydrated Before and After Surgery

Drinking enough fluids is very important for healing.

- Drink at least 64 ounces each day of water or sugar-free flavored liquids.
- Hydrating liquids do **not** have caffeine, protein, or alcohol.
 - This includes energy drinks, and mocha or latte protein shakes.
- Avoiding alcohol helps your body heal as well as possible. Do **not** drink alcohol for:
 - 2 weeks before surgery
 - At least 3 months after surgery

Vitamins and Supplements

- Follow your surgeon's instructions about vitamins and supplements.
- **Stop** taking the following 7 days before surgery. These can affect the medicines used during surgery:
 - Multivitamins
 - Vitamin D and vitamin K
 - Probiotics, prebiotics, green tea, fish oil, and all herbal supplements
- Food sources of vitamins (like fish and yogurt) are okay.
- It is usually safe to restart your bariatric vitamins once you start eating a solid-food diet. Ask your care team what is safe for you.

Preventing Constipation Before and After Surgery

Constipation (difficulty pooping) is common around surgery.

- Mix Miralax into a large bottle of water and sip it over half of the day.
- You may increase the amount if needed.
- **Goal:** have one banana-shaped bowel movement (poop) each day.

Questions?

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

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