

Esophageal Diet After Surgery

Nutrition guidelines

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

Eating After Your Surgery

Your recent surgery affected your *esophagus* (the tube that carries food and drink from your mouth to your stomach). You may have swelling in your lower esophagus, which makes it harder for food to go down.

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

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 moist, soft, solid foods are too hard to swallow, or you have nausea and belly 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. At first, you may be able to eat only about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of food at a time.
- Instead of eating 3 large meals, eat 5 to 6 small meals a day.
- Cut food into small pieces. Chew well.
- Keep foods moist with sauces, broth, or gravy.
- Drink plenty of liquids between meals. Aim for 8 to 10 cups of liquid each day. One cup equals 8 ounces.



Try eating 5 to 6 small meals a day instead of 3 large meals.

- Focus on eating foods that are high in calories, protein, and nutrients. This diet will help your wound heal and prevent muscles loss. It will also help you maintain your weight.
- After discharge, if you keep losing weight for longer than 1 week, call your dietitian or diet technician.

Soft Esophageal Diet at Home

Food Group	OK to Eat and Drink	Do NOT Eat or Drink
Meats and Other Proteins (2 to 3 oz. portions) <i>Chop meat into pea-sized pieces and add sauce, broth or gravy for moisture.</i>	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	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 <i>**OK to eat meats if they are pureed</i>
Breads and Cereals	Cooked or dry cereal moistened with milk: cream of wheat or rice, instant oats or grits, Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Special K	Breads, rolls, crackers; whole-grain, high-fiber dry or cooked cereals; old-fashioned or steel-cut oatmeal; cereals with dried fruits, nuts, or seeds
Starches	Peeled, well-cooked, moist potatoes, peeled potatoes in sauces; well-cooked pasta in sauce, cut into small pieces; hummus, canned refried beans	Potato chips, potato skins, fried potatoes, rice and other grains, corn, whole beans such as pinto, black, kidney
Vegetables	Vegetable juices; cooked vegetables that are soft enough to be mashed with a fork (such as carrots, beets, squash, or green beans)	Raw or fried vegetables, salad, celery, peas, spinach, vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts that can cause gas
Fruits	Fruit juices; cooked or canned fruits without seeds or skin (peaches, pears, mandarin oranges); ripe bananas, melon, mango, papaya	All other fresh, frozen, or dried fruits; cooked or canned fruits with seeds or skins (apples, berries, oranges, pineapple, pomegranate)
Drinks <i>64 oz. a day</i>	All OK except carbonated drinks	Carbonated drinks: soda pop, sparkling water, beer; chia seed drinks

Food Group	OK to Eat and Drink	Do NOT Eat or Drink
Soups	Soups made with allowed foods that are easy to chew, such as chicken noodle, tomato, blended cream soup, blended split pea soup	Avoid soups with rice, other grains, or large chunks of meat or vegetables
Sweets and Snacks	Pudding, custard, ice cream, sherbet, fruit ice, frozen yogurt, gelatin made with allowed foods, popsicles, milkshakes, smoothies, sugar, syrup, honey, jelly, plain chocolate	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
Fats and Condiments	Butter, margarine, salad dressing, mayonnaise, gravy, oils (coconut, olive, canola), sour cream, cream cheese, mild spices, ketchup, mustard, barbeque sauce, whipped toppings	Chunky condiments such as salad dressings with seeds, fruit, or vegetables; cream cheese with fruit or vegetable pieces
Pre-made Protein Drinks	Ensure, Boost, Glucerna, Slimfast, Carnation Instant Breakfast	

Boosting Calories

After surgery, your body needs calories for healing. Most people need to eat 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. How much you need depends on whether you were born as a male or as a female:

- People born as male will need 10 or more servings of protein a day. This is at least 70 grams of protein.
- People born as female will need 8 or more servings of protein a day. This is at least 56 grams of protein.

Serving Sizes

One serving of protein equals 7 grams of protein. This list of high-protein foods shows serving sizes that contain 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

Easy Ways to Add Protein to Your Diet

- Use milk, Fortified Milk (see recipe below), 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 more.
- Eat a snack of cottage cheese with avocado or canned fruit.

Recipes for High-Calorie, High-Protein Drinks

You can make these drinks at home to supplement your diet. Change the flavors to suit your own tastes. You may also use pre-made high-calorie, high-protein drinks. If you cannot tolerate lactose, use soy milk, rice milk, or almond milk instead of cow's milk.

Fortified Milk

Makes 4 servings

- 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 8 oz. serving: 265 calories, 18 grams protein (2½ protein servings)

Breakfast in a Glass

- 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 10 oz. serving: With whole milk: 210 calories, 10 grams protein; with Fortified Milk: 270 calories, 15 grams protein (2 protein servings)

Egg Nog

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

Blend all ingredients.

Per 10 oz. serving: With whole milk: 210 calories, 14 grams protein; with Fortified Milk: 320 calories, 25 grams protein (3½ protein servings)

High-Protein Shake

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

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

Per 12 oz. serving: 340 calories, 10 grams protein (1½ protein servings)

Basic Banana Smoothie

1 serving

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

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

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

Yogurt Shake

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

Blend all ingredients until smooth.

Per 8 oz. 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

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

Questions?

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

Registered Dietitian:

Phone:
