

## **Nutrition Before Heart Surgery**

### *Helping your body recover well*

*This handout is for patients who are having heart surgery at University of Washington Medical Center - Montlake. It explains how to eat now to help your body recover after your surgery.*

### **Why is my diet before surgery important?**

We want you to recover well after your surgery. This is why we ask you to watch your diet both now and after your surgery.

Eating healthy foods now will help your body:

- Be strong for surgery
- Heal more quickly after surgery
- Resist inflammation and infection

### **What do I need to do?**

Be sure to eat enough calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals in the days and weeks before surgery. Here are some tips to help get your body in good shape before surgery. Please also follow these tips after surgery to help your body heal.

#### **Tip 1: Eat for Healing**

- Eat enough food (calories) to help you maintain weight.
- Eat nutritious foods that will help your body heal. These include whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and plant-based milks such as almond, soy, or coconut.
- Eat protein foods at every meal. Healthy choices are lean meat, fish, poultry, beans, tofu, eggs, cheese, nuts, dairy products, plant-based protein products, and protein drinks.



*Follow the tips in this handout to help your body be ready for surgery.*

- Drink at least 6 to 8 full cups (8 ounces each) of fluid each day.
- Add a daily protein drink if you cannot eat enough food.

## Tip 2: Eat to Fight Inflammation

Eating these foods may help reduce inflammation after surgery:

- Foods that are high in omega 3 fatty acids. These include salmon, tuna, trout, sardines, halibut, sole, or shellfish. If you prefer plant-based foods, try chia seeds, hemp seeds, flax seeds or flaxseed oil, walnuts, and algal oil (from algae).
- Walnuts, almonds, pecans, peanuts, or hazelnuts.
- Olive oil, for sautéing, added to salads, or as a dip for bread.
- Fruits and vegetables that are high in vitamins and antioxidants. These include blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, red grapes, broccoli, carrots, spinach, eggplant, and beets.
- Turmeric, a bright yellow spice that adds a savory flavor to meats, poultry, vegetables, or grain dishes. It is also tasty as a tea.

## How else can I help my body heal after surgery?

- Keep your blood sugar levels under control, both before and after surgery.
- If you recently lost weight without trying or you find it hard to eat well, talk with your provider. They may ask you to meet with a registered dietitian.
- Your provider may advise you to drink an *immune modulating supplement*. These drinks help reduce infection rates and other problems that can occur after surgery. Ask your provider if this type of drink is right for you.

### Questions?

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

#### Heart Institute at UWMC - Montlake:

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call 206.598.8060 to talk with a nurse.

At all other times, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiac Surgery provider on call.

You can also use MyChart to send a question to your care team.