

Eating and Drinking Long-term Following a Sleeve Gastrectomy

What is a Normal Diet Following a Sleeve Gastrectomy?

You may now be managing a normal consistency diet but do not be concerned if you continue to struggle to eat certain textures of foods. Continue to add new foods slowly, one at a time and over the coming months you will slowly be able to increase the variety of foods you are eating.

Some foods may be difficult to manage, and you may need to avoid certain meats or vegetables for several months. To remain healthy, it is important to eat a variety of foods and remember that your tastes will have changed so this is the time to try new foods!

In order to get the best from your surgery and reduce the risk of weight regain you would benefit from following:

- **A protein rich, low calorie diet**
- A low fat and low sugar diet for life
- Aiming for **60g protein per day**
- Keeping to small, balanced, portion sizes

Getting the right balance of the different food groups is important. Protein continues to be an important part of your meal to help reduce hunger between meals and ensure muscle mass is maintained whilst fat is lost. Your protein should be eaten first and then followed by a very small amount of carbohydrate; this may only be 1-2 teaspoons. You may not be able to manage any vegetables or salad at this point but with time you should be able to incorporate a small amount of vegetable into your daily intake.

The proportions of your meals should initially be $\frac{3}{4}$ protein and $\frac{1}{4}$ carbohydrate and vegetables.

If you are concerned that your protein intake is low, then you can incorporate a protein snack or milky drink in between your meals but discuss this with the team first.

To avoid dumping aim for food which is low in fat and low in sugar. These foods will also aid your weight loss.

Portion Sizes

It is also very important to control your portion sizes and you may feel that you can eat more than what we recommend. We suggest using a ramekin or a small tea-plate (3-5 inches maximum) which is not overfilled or piled high. Eating too much can cause your small stomach pouch to stretch, which will affect your weight loss long term and can contribute to weight regain in the future.

Portion sizes at this stage are a guide only. We advise that you do not exceed these quantities but also be aware that you may not be able to manage this amount. Do not be concerned if you are managing only a few teaspoons of protein, 1 or 2 teaspoons of carbohydrate and no vegetables at all.

If your weight loss starts to slow down or it is not as you or your bariatric team had expected, it is likely that your portion sizes are too large. This can be discussed with the team at your next appointment or you can contact the team by telephone or email to discuss further.

A new way of eating will help you to work with your gastric sleeve. Aim to:

- Eat slowly – a meal should take around 15-20 minutes to eat. If you are taking longer than this, your meal will go cold and this is a sign that you are eating too much. Put utensils down in between bites to help you to eat slowly.
- Chew food well and take your time with meals (although you should no longer need to puree or mash foods, it will need to be tender and chewed well). Cut food into small pieces to help you to remember to take small mouthfuls.
- Stop eating at the first sign of bloating or discomfort. This is a sign that you have eaten too much. Never go back to food after your meal or eat the remainder of your meal some time later. Aim to stop eating when you feel satisfied rather than full.
- Practise eating mindfully such as sitting down for all meals and snacks, avoiding eating whilst driving, and removing distractions whilst eating e.g. television viewing.
- Incorporate regular activity into your day.
- Take time to taste your food and enjoy what you are eating!

Problems following eating and drinking:

If you do feel uncomfortable or experience nausea after eating, think back and identify if you:

- have eaten too fast or not chewed your food well enough
- have eaten too much
- have given yourself enough time to eat your meal
- have eaten the correct texture food

If you vomit or feel sick at this stage, it is generally not normal, and you should be able to identify why this has happened.

Keeping a food diary can be very useful to help you identify the reason for your difficulties. It may be that you keep it for your own records or ask the team to take a look and give you advice.

Top Tips for eating a healthy diet following a sleeve gastrectomy

There are five main food groups which will help you to achieve your nutritional requirements after your surgery. The best source of vitamins and minerals is from a healthy diet so you will need to ensure that your diet includes a mix of each food group. Even when following a healthy diet, you will need to take your nutritional supplements to maintain your health lifelong.

Protein foods:

- Protein foods such as lean meat, fish, low-fat cheese, eggs, beans, pulses or lentils should be included at each meal to meet dietary requirements. Aim to include a variety of protein sources.
- Milk and dairy foods also provide protein and are a good source of calcium to maintain healthy bones. Low fat cheese or low fat cottage cheese, skimmed or semi skimmed milk and diet or fat free yoghurts or milk puddings made with skimmed or semi skimmed milk are a good way of adding protein at main meals or between meals if you are struggling with your protein intake. Three portions of dairy foods per day will ensure you are getting enough calcium from your diet.
- Protein can be boosted at breakfast time by having a small poached/scrambled egg on a small piece of wholemeal or granary toast.

Carbohydrate foods:

- Carbohydrate foods such as bread, rice, pasta, potatoes and cereals may be difficult for some to digest following surgery. Soft white doughy bread should be replaced with wholemeal or granary bread, crisp breads or low fat crackers. Toast may be better tolerated than bread. Aim for 1 small portion of carbohydrate per meal to ensure your blood sugar levels are controlled and you have enough energy to increase your everyday activity levels and incorporate more exercise.
- Carbohydrate foods can also be a good source of fibre if you chose wholemeal or wholegrain varieties of bread, pasta, rice etc.

Fruit and Vegetables:

- You may initially struggle to incorporate fruit and vegetables into your diet in order to meet your protein requirements. In time this will be possible and aim to consume 2-3 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. A portion of fruit and vegetables will be much smaller than before your surgery. A small glass of

unsweetened tomato juice or unsweetened, diluted fruit juice will count as 1 portion. Tinned fruit in juice, a small banana or a portion of small fresh fruit will also count. Vegetables will need to be non-starchy (potato does not count towards your vegetable intake). Initially snacks should be protein based to meet protein requirements.

Fat and Sugary foods:

- Replace puddings with low fat yoghurt. Aim to avoid calorie rich foods such as chocolate, sweets, ice cream, crisps, pastries etc which will cause dumping. These foods will not provide any valuable nutrition so should be avoided.
- Try to minimise the use of spreads and opt for a low-fat spread and low calorie salad cream to replace mayonnaise. Use only a small amount of olive oil or rapeseed oil for cooking if required.

Dumping Syndrome

Dumping Syndrome is the rapid emptying of food from your newly formed stomach pouch into your small intestine. The small intestine fills with this partially undigested food which acts like a sponge to draw fluid into the gut and causes the varied symptoms of dumping. Although dumping syndrome is more common following gastric bypass surgery, patients who have had a sleeve gastrectomy can still experience dumping.

There are 2 types of dumping syndrome:

- "Early" dumping begins during or right after a meal. Symptoms of early dumping include nausea, vomiting, bloating, cramping, diarrhoea, dizziness and fatigue.
- "Late" dumping happens 1 to 3 hours after eating. Symptoms of late dumping include weakness, sweating, and dizziness.

Dumping syndrome is largely avoidable or manageable by avoiding certain foods (e.g. chocolate, biscuits, cakes, sweets, desserts, high sugar drinks) or changing eating habits and behaviours.

How to avoid/reduce symptoms:

- Avoid sugary and high fat foods
- Eat smaller meals
- Take your time with eating and chew food well
- Eat balanced meals with a protein, carbohydrate and vegetable source

Some people will be more prone to dumping with carbohydrate foods than others. If dumping is a problem and there is not an obvious cause (i.e. high fat or sugary foods) it is recommended that you keep a detailed food and symptom diary to help identify which foods are more likely to cause symptoms.

Foods that are higher in fibre (and less refined or processed) will take longer to breakdown and are therefore less likely to cause dumping. For example, some people

may tolerate mashed potato, but others may experience dumping symptoms and only tolerate new potatoes.

Dumping syndrome can be difficult to understand and has many causes and symptoms. If you have experienced any of these symptoms, please discuss your symptoms further with your Dietitian. It will be helpful to keep a food and symptom diary for several days in advance of any discussion.