Weight Loss Surgery

Post-Op Nutrition Guide

BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER

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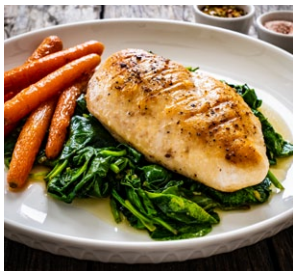
Diet Stages After Weight Loss Surgery

This packet provides a guide of your diet after weight loss surgery. The chart below is a brief summary of the different stages of the diet and the length of time you will be on each stage. We will go into each stage in more detail on the following pages.

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
1 day	2-3 weeks	4 weeks	Lifelong
			
Clear liquids	Protein shakes and semi-liquids	Soft, high-protein foods	High-protein and high-fiber foods

You will start off on a liquid diet and slowly progress to more textured foods once your stomach has healed. If you introduce more solid foods too soon, you increase your risk for a serious complication after surgery. It is very important for your safety that you do not advance your diet without permission from your bariatric team.

Stage 1 Diet

You will only be on this diet while in the hospital. You will be limited to clear liquids. All fluids will be caffeine free, carbonation free, and sugar free.

Time frame: Day 1 after surgery

Instructions

Sip fluids slowly, aiming for about 1 ounce (oz.) or 30 milliliters (mL) over 15 minutes and increase as tolerated.

Fluids included in Stage 1:

- Water
- Decaffeinated tea
- Decaffeinated coffee
- Sugar-free gelatin
- Crystal Light
- Broth
- Sugar-free popsicles

Stage 2 Diet

You will be on a semi-liquid diet for a few weeks after surgery to help heal your stomach. It is very important not to advance to the next diet stage until you are cleared by your surgeon.

Time frame: Day 2 until follow-up visit with surgeon. Generally, this stage lasts 2-3 weeks.

Instructions

Drink protein shakes and about ½ cup semi-liquid food from the options listed below.

Fluids goal: At least 48 fluid oz. (6 cups or 1.5 liters) a day

Protein goal: 60-80 grams per day

Vitamins/minerals: Start chewable or liquid supplements

> Multivitamin with iron
> Calcium citrate: 1200-1500 mg/day
> Vitamin B complex with vitamin B12
> Thiamin or vitamin B1

Stage 2 diet tips

- Sip all fluids slowly. Try to drink 4-8 oz. an hour (1/2-1 cup).
- Avoid using straws to reduce gas and burping and avoid drinking too fast.
- Always carry a drink with you everywhere you go.
- Keep track of what you are eating and drinking It is important to avoid dehydration and eat enough protein to heal well.
- Do not advance to the next diet stage until after you meet with your surgeon.
- Call your dietitian if you have any questions about what you can or cannot eat or drink.

Stage 2 options

All beverages must be without bubbles or carbonation, caffeine, or alcohol. Except for milk or protein shakes, all other beverages should have 5 calories or less per 8 fluid oz. serving.

Beverage options

- Water
- Decaf tea or coffee
- Bouillon, broth or strained soup
- Sugar-free flavored water
- Sugar-free or diet juice
- Sugar-free popsicles
- Sugar-free gelatin
- Sugar-free electrolyte drinks
- Tomato or V8 juice (May need low sodium)

Protein options

- Bone broth
- Greek or Icelandic- yogurt
    - > 120 calories or less per 6 oz.
    - > 12g protein or more per 6 oz.
    - > No chunks of fruit or seeds
- Egg drop soup
- Ready-to-drink protein shake

You can use skim or low-fat milk, Lactaid milk, or Fairlife milk in the following:

- Protein powder
- Sugar-free pudding
- Sugar-free or diet hot cocoa
- Tomato soup

Protein Supplements

There will be periods of time after surgery when you will need to use protein supplements to help get enough protein. Some acceptable options are listed below.

Ask your dietitian about any supplements you plan on using that are not on this list.

Protein powder	Ready-to-drink protein shake
150 calories or fewer	200 calories or fewer
20 to 30 grams of protein per serving	20 to 30 grams of protein per serving
4 grams added sugar or less	4 grams added sugar or less
Directions: Mix with 8 oz. skim milk, unsweetened almond milk, or soy milk	
Whey Protein Powder	**Whey Ready to Drink Shakes**
Vegan Protein Powder	**Vegan Ready to Drink Shakes**

Protein Shake Recipes

Below are some options for making high-protein smoothies. Please only use sugar-free options for pudding, jams, syrups, or other flavorings. If using a flavored yogurt, look for options that have zero grams of added sugar.

Chocolate Protein Shake

- 1 scoop or 1 serving chocolate protein powder
- ½ cup low-fat Greek or Icelandic yogurt
- 1 cup water, or unsweetened low-fat milk of choice
- 5 ice cubes

Strawberry Orange Banana Protein Shake

- 1 scoop or 1 serving vanilla protein powder
- ½ cup low-fat Greek or Icelandic yogurt
- 2 tsp. Crystal Light Strawberry Orange Banana Drink Mix
- 1 cup water, or unsweetened low-fat milk of choice
- 5 ice cubes

Peanut Butter Protein Shake

- 1 scoop or 1 serving vanilla protein powder
- ½ cup low-fat Greek or Icelandic yogurt
- 2 tbsp PB2 powdered peanut butter
- 1 cup water, or unsweetened low-fat milk of choice
- 5 ice cubes

Egg Drop Soup Recipe

This soup is a great option when you are craving something savory.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup broth
- 1 egg or 2 egg whites

Instructions:

- Whisk an egg in a small cup and set aside.
- In a saucepan, bring the broth to a boil.
- Once the broth is boiling, turn off the burner and remove from heat.
- Slowly pour the egg over the edge of a fork into the saucepan.
- Stop often to whisk the broth in clockwise motion.
- Continue adding egg until fully incorporated in the broth.
- Salt and pepper as desired and enjoy!

What to Do If You No Longer Like Your Protein Shake

Sometimes after surgery, you may develop changes to your taste or tolerance to foods, and this can include protein supplements. If you are finding the shakes are no longer palatable, here are some options:

1. Dilute: Add extra milk and reduce the amount of protein shake or protein powder to make a drink less sweet.

2. Change protein type: Try vegan, soy, or egg white protein powders or ready to drink shakes for a different taste and texture.

3. Try clear protein drinks: Try products that mix more like a juice than a milk shake. Some examples are Nectar or Isopure for powders, and Isopure and Protein2O for ready-to-drink options.

4. Try savory over sweet: Use bone broth, Unjury broth supplements, or mix unflavored protein powder into broths or strained soups for a more savory option.

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

After surgery you will eat less and not absorb all your nutrients as well as you did before surgery. This puts you at risk for vitamin and mineral deficiencies, which can cause very significant health issues and need to be taken seriously. You will need to take supplements every day for the rest of your life to safely avoid deficiencies. Some patients may need to take additional supplements.

You will need to take the following supplements:

- Multivitamin with iron
- Calcium citrate: 1200-1500 mg/day
- Vitamin B complex with vitamin B12
- Thiamin or vitamin B1

All vitamin and mineral supplements must be in a chewable or liquid form in the first six weeks after surgery. You can switch to tablets or capsules once your surgeon has given you permission.

Tips for vitamins and minerals:

- Avoid any gummies.
- Plan to take supplements with meals to help you remember.
- Space out supplements so you do not take them all at once.
- If taking a separate calcium supplement, try to take it at a different time of day than with your multivitamin.
- Let your bariatric team know if you are having a hard time with any supplement.

Three Ways to Take Your Supplements

Option 1

All-in-one options: Cost = about $25-30/month

Instructions: Take one chewable wafer four times a day. Choose only one option below.

Bariatric Choice All-in -One Multivitamin and Calcium Citrate		Bariatric Fusion Complete Chewable	

Schedule

Breakfast:	Bariatric all-in-one chewable
Lunch:	Bariatric all-in-one chewable
Dinner:	Bariatric all-in-one chewable
Bedtime:	Bariatric all-in-one-chewable

Option 2

Bariatric multivitamin with iron + calcium: Cost = about $35-60/month

Instructions: Take one chewable multivitamin and three calcium chews per day.

Choose 1 multivitamin		**Choose 1 calcium**	
Bariatric Pal Multivitamin One Chewable Multivitamin with Iron		Bariatric Pal Calcium Citrate	
Procare Multivitamin with Iron		Unjury Calcium Citrate	

Schedule

Breakfast:	Bariatric Multivitamin with Iron
Lunch:	Calcium
Dinner:	Calcium
Bedtime:	Calcium

Three Ways to Take Your Supplements

Option 3

Pharmacy brand supplements: Cost = about $15-40/month
Instructions: Take two chewable multivitamins, three calcium chewables or one tablespoon or liquid, one dose of liquid B-complex and one thiamin chewable per day.

Choose 1 multivitamin		**Choose 1 calcium**	
Walmart Equate Brand Children's Chewable Multivitamin		Nature's Way Liquid Calcium & Vitamin D3	
Target Up & UP Kid's Multivitamin Complete		GNC Brand Calcium Citrate Chews ($40/month)	

You must also take both a B complex and a Thiamin supplement.

Vitamin B Complex with Vitamin B12		25mg Vitamin B1	

Schedule

Breakfast:	Multivitamin with iron + B complex
Snack:	Calcium
Lunch:	Calcium
Dinner:	Multivitamin with iron + B1 thiamin
Bedtime:	Calcium

Cost estimates are approximate and can vary by location and product. Do not use anything not included in this booklet without checking with your dietitian.

Stage 2 Diet: Sample Menu

Time	Food and Beverages	Fluid (oz.)	Protein (Grams)
7 - 8 a.m.	Herbal Tea	4 oz.	
8 - 9 a.m.	Protein shake + vitamins	8 oz.	24 g
9 -10 a.m.	Water	4 oz.	
10 a.m. - noon	Crystal Light	8 oz.	
12 - 1 p.m.	½ cup tomato soup mix with ½ cup skim milk	8 oz.	4 g
1 - 3 p.m.	Propel	8 oz.	
3:30 - 4 p.m.	½ cup Greek yogurt	8 oz.	10 g
4:30 - 6 p.m.	Water	8 oz.	
6 - 7 p.m.	Protein shake + vitamins	12 oz.	30 g
7 - 8 p.m.	Water	4 oz.	
8 - 9 p.m.	Sugar-free popsicle	1 oz.	
	Total	65 oz.	64 g

Stage 3 Diet

This stage consists of solid foods; however, they should be soft enough to cut with the edge of a fork.

Time frame: Continue for about six weeks after surgery.

Instructions

Fluids goal: At least 48 fluid oz. (6 cups or 1.5L) a day.

Protein goal: 60-80 grams per day

Vitamins/minerals: Continue chewable or liquid supplements

> Multivitamin with iron
> Calcium citrate: 1200-1500 mg/day
> Vitamin B complex with vitamin B12
> Thiamin or vitamin B1

Stage 3 diet tips

- **Aim small.** Portions will be about ¼ to 1/3 cup when eating solid food.
- **Eat slowly.** Plan about 20-30 minutes to eat a meal.
- **Chew, chew, chew.** Chew each bite until it is like the consistency of applesauce.
- **Do not drink with your foods.** Stop drinking 30 minutes before eating and wait until 30 minutes after you eat to drink again.
- **Make sure your food is moist.** Use low-sugar condiments, sauces, and marinades to moisten food.
- **Stop eating as soon as you feel full.** Do not force yourself to eat more than what is comfortable.
- **Try new foods one at a time.** If you do not react well to a food, wait a few weeks and try it again. Remember, there will be some foods you may never tolerate well, and sometimes you just need to heal a little bit longer.
- **Track what you are eating and drinking in a journal or an app.** This will help you learn what foods and drinks work well for you.
- **Continue using your protein shakes for most of your protein.** You want to continue drinking the protein shakes until you can comfortably reach your protein goal with solid food only.

Stage 3 options

You can have all foods and beverages listed in the Stage 2 Diet. You can also try some new foods:

Food	Amount	Protein (Grams)
Cooked fish (not shellfish)	1 oz.	7 g
Canned tuna or chicken	¼ oz.	5 g
Lean deli meat (ham, chicken, turkey, roast beef)	1 oz.	6-7 g
Fat-free or low-fat cheese	1 oz. or ¼ cup shredded	6 g
Fat-free or low-fat cottage cheese	¼ cup	8 g
Greek or Icelandic yogurt	¼ cup	4-5 g
Large egg, 2 egg whites or ¼ cup Egg Beaters		6 g
Ground lean turkey or chicken	1 oz.	7 g
Ground soy or bean burger	1 oz.	5-7 g
Diced moist chicken or turkey in sauce, low-fat gravy, or broth	1 oz.	7 g

Stage 3 Diet: Sample Menu

Time	Food and Beverages	Fluid (oz.)	Protein (Grams)
7:30 a.m.	Herbal Tea	4 oz.	
8 - 8:30 a.m.	1 egg + 1 oz. low-fat cheese + vitamins		12 g
9 - 10 a.m.	Water	8 oz.	
10 - 11 a.m.	½ Protein Shake	6 oz.	15 g
11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Water	8 oz.	
1 - 1:30 p.m.	1 slice cheese +2 slices deli turkey		13 g
2 - 5 p.m.	Propel	12 oz.	
5:30 - 6 p.m.	2 oz. baked salmon + vitamins		14 g
6:30 - 8 p.m.	Water	8 oz.	
8 - 9 p.m.	½ protein shake	6 oz.	15 g
9 p.m.	Herbal tea	4 oz.	
	Total	56 oz.	69 g

Stage 4 Diet

Congratulations! You are ready to begin eating solid food that is almost normal in texture and consistency. However, it is crucial that you start new foods slowly and keep track of foods you do not tolerate well. Eventually, you will be able to eat a wide variety of foods, but for now it is important to try new foods one at a time

Time frame: Starts 6 weeks after surgery.

Instructions

Fluids goal: At least 48 fluid oz. (6 cups or 1.5L) a day.

Protein goal: Ask your dietitian

Vitamins/minerals: Continue supplements as below. At this time, you can continue the chewable or liquid products, or switch to tablets or capsules.

> Multivitamin with iron
> Calcium citrate: 1200-1500 mg/day
> Vitamin B complex with vitamin B12
> Thiamin or vitamin B1

Stage 4 diet tips

Continue all tips from Stage 3. In addition, remember the following:

- Continue to eat protein first at meals.
- Eat vegetables second to work on increasing fiber.
- If you have space after your protein and vegetables, add some fruit.
- Once you are comfortable eating protein, vegetables, and fruits, you can start adding in starches and grains.
- Eat 3 - 4 meals a day. Do not snack or graze between meals.
- Continue using protein shakes as needed to get enough protein.
- Continue not drinking with meals.
- Avoid alcohol until approved by your surgeon or dietitian.

Foods to Add

You can continue having all foods listed in stages 1 through 3, and also add the following.

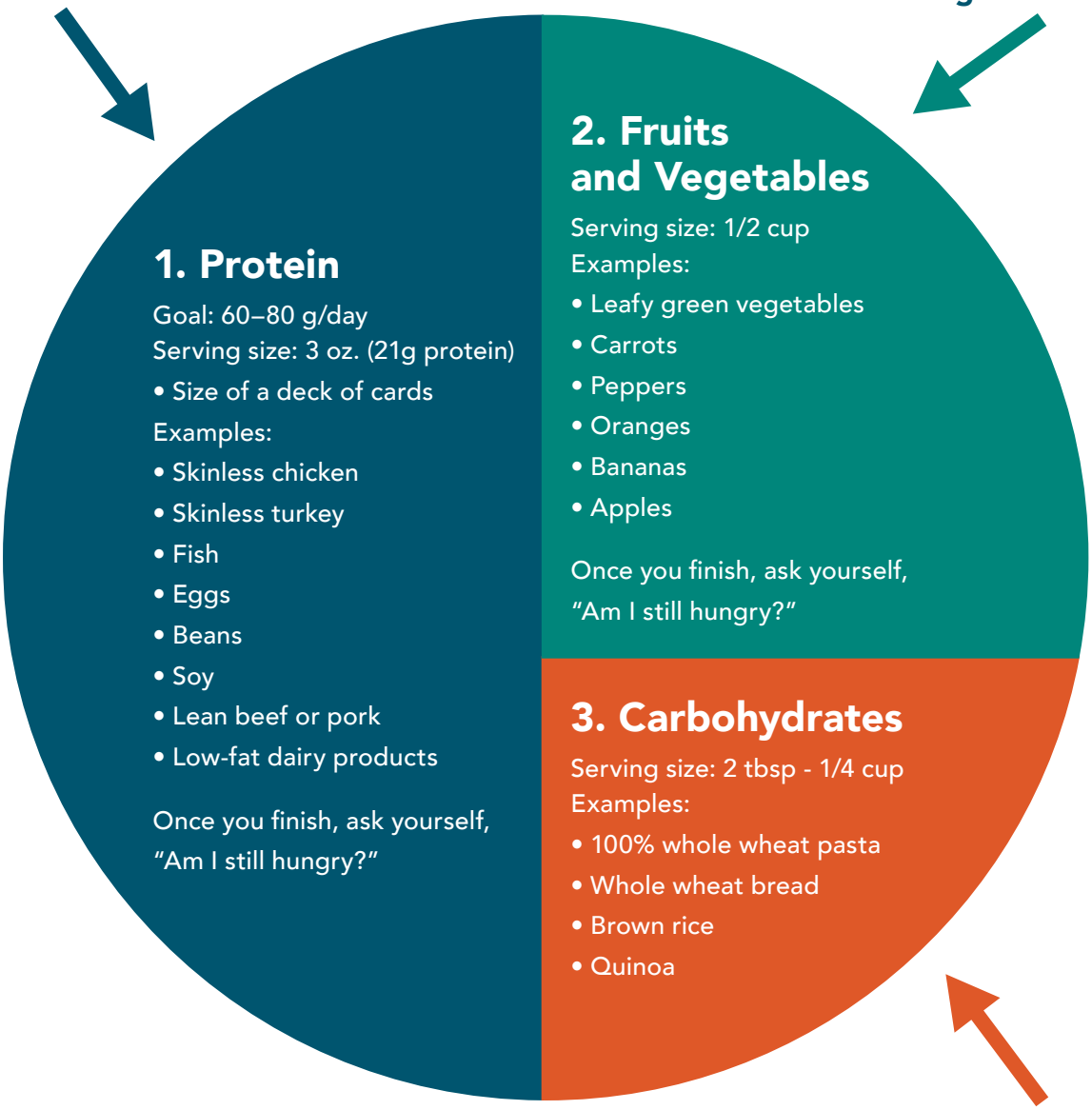
- Fresh fruits and vegetables – cooked and raw
- Nuts and seeds
- Shellfish
- Meat

You can now add more texture to your diet but remember that you may need to remove skins from fruits or vegetables and may struggle with tough textures like chewy meat.

Setting Up Your Plate

Always eat protein first

Eat fruits and vegetables second



Eat starch or grain if room permits

Adding Starchy Vegetables and Grains

One of the most common questions after surgery is when you can start eating foods like rice and bread. There is no single answer that works best for everyone. It will depend on the food, the portion, where you are in your weight loss journey, and how your body reacts both physically and emotionally to the food. Some patients may find foods that triggered overeating or food cravings before surgery may have the same effect when reintroducing those foods.

If you want to start adding some of these foods back into your diet, ask yourself:

- Am I getting all my protein with food?
- Am I getting all my fluids or beverages?
- Am I getting vegetables with at least two meals a day?
- Am I moving or exercising regularly?
- Am I happy with my weight loss so far?
- Am I willing to keep a food record?
- Am I generally content and free from stress?
- Am I getting enough sleep?
- Am I following up with my bariatric team as instructed?

If you answer "yes" to these questions, you may be ready to start adding small amounts of starchy vegetables or grains to your diet. Your dietitian can help you with this transition, and it is strongly recommended that you check in before adding in these types of foods, as well as a few months after you start.

Food	Amount
Potatoes, sweet potato, yams, butternut squash, yucca, cassava, plantains	¼ cup to ½ cup cooked
Whole wheat or whole grain bread	1 small slice
English muffin or bagel	½ English muffin or ¼ bagel
Cooked oatmeal	½ cup cooked
Corn or peas	¼ cup
Quinoa, farro, barley, wheat berries, buckwheat, wild rice, rice, brown rice	¼ cup cooked

Learn About Your New Stomach or Pouch

Weight loss surgery is a learning process. There is no right or wrong experience along the way. All stomachs react differently. Here are some ways to help you get familiar with the newest part of your body.

Learn to know when you are full

Listen to your stomach. After surgery, you may not necessarily feel hunger, but you will likely feel full much faster since your stomach is so much smaller. Feeling full may feel like discomfort, or pressure, and can happen very rapidly and without warning. This is why eating slowly is so important. Take your time eating so you can feel the restriction and stop eating when you are comfortably satisfied, and not stuffed, in pain, nauseous, or vomiting.

Understand how your stomach or pouch will stretch

Naturally, over the course of a year, everyone's stomach will stretch. This is expected and is beneficial because it allows you to consume more nutritious foods. However, it is possible to stretch a pouch beyond the expected amount, which is when weight regain can occur. Overeating, drinking with meals, and drinking carbonated beverages may contribute to over-stretching your stomach or pouch. When the stomach or pouch is stretched, you may regain weight. Continue to follow your nutrition guidelines to avoid this as much as possible.

How to Manage Food Cravings

After surgery, food cravings come from your brain, not your belly. These are short-term cravings that are often affected by mood, emotion, environment, stress, poor sleep, boredom, and old habits. Dealing with food cravings is hard, but it will become easier with practice. Here are some ideas to help.

- Identify your eating triggers: Use journaling or ask for help from your dietitian or behavioral health clinician to identify what might be triggering this craving. Once you know the reason, you can find a non-food solution.

- Identify alternatives: Write down your food triggers, and then write down things you can do instead of eating. Food is always an option, but you don't want it to be your only option.

- Manage your environment: Once you know what can trigger food cravings, you can take steps to remove that trigger. For example, if having snacks out on the counter makes you want to eat them, you may have to relocate them to an area of the kitchen where they are not visible. This is another thing your dietitian can help you with.

- Move regularly: Exercise changes your response to food in your brain, making it easier to practice portion control. Exercise also helps manage stress and improves sleep, which will help prevent cravings for starches and sweets in the future.

- Indulge mindfully: You do not need to have a perfect diet to lose weight and maintain it. But try to be mindful with foods that are more indulgent. Mindful eating practices can be very helpful for this. Take time to savor your food, and do not waste space in your new pouch for food you are not going to really enjoy. If you find yourself feeling deprived or want to incorporate a new food into your diet but are unsure how to do it while supporting your weight loss, ask your dietitian.

Tips for Dining Out

Eating out at restaurants, or at a social event like a party, are still going to be a part of your life after weight loss surgery. It is important to remember to stick to foods you tolerate well, and to prepare ahead of time so you are comfortable, meet your nutrition goals, and don't get sick. Here are some tips to help you navigate eating out:

- Choose restaurants you are familiar with.
- Review the menu ahead of time and plan what you will have.
- Ask the server how the food is cooked and prepared.
- Consider all parts of the menu, including the children's menu and appetizers.
- Split a meal with a friend or partner
- Ask for ½ of your meal to be packed up in a to-go container before it is brought out. This will help you to not overeat.
- Try to avoid eating a new food out in public. This will minimize any chance of getting sick from a food your stomach cannot tolerate well, or that may cause dumping syndrome.
- Continue to prioritize protein first, then vegetables.
- Avoid buffets, you will never eat your money's worth.
- Avoid dishes that are fried or served with cream or cheese sauces.

Example restaurant dishes:

Type of Restaurant	Foods to Look For
Fast food	Chili, salads with grilled chicken, hamburger or grilled chicken with no bun
Mexican	Fajitas, chili, tacos (limit sour cream), rice, and tortillas
Seafood	Baked fish, steamed vegetables, grilled vegetables
Italian	Baked fish, chicken, beef, meatballs (limit pasta)
Chinese	Steamed foods (limit rice)

Common Nutrition Problems and Tips

Refer to these tips if you have any of the following problems after your surgery. Be sure to keep a list of these problems to share with your care providers if you continue to have them.

Nausea and vomiting

Causes: Overeating or eating too quickly, drinking with meals, eating foods that are too spicy or high in fat or sugar

Prevention tips:

- Eat slowly, chew your food very well, and stop eating as soon as you feel full.
- Drink only between meals.
- Avoid concentrated sweets and refined carbohydrates.
- Go back to clear liquids for 1-2 days to rest your stomach. If you continue vomiting, please call us.

Lactose intolerance

Symptoms: Gas, bloating, cramping and diarrhea after drinking milk

Prevention tips:

- Drink smaller amounts of milk at a time.
- Use lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk.
- Try dairy-free milk alternatives (soy, almond, coconut, or oat).

Dehydration

Symptoms: Dark and strong-smelling urine, dry mouth, headache and fatigue

Prevention tips:

- Take frequent sips of liquid throughout the day.
- Drink at least 48-64 oz. of fluids a day.

Dumping syndrome (typically only occurs with gastric bypass)

Cause: Food emptying too quickly from the stomach. Dumping syndrome occurs primarily after consuming sugar-rich foods or beverages or drinking fluids too soon after a meal.

Symptoms: Diarrhea, nausea, sweats, and light-headedness

Note: *You may also experience late dumping, which is a form of hypoglycemia that occurs 2-3 hours after eating. The only way to completely avoid dumping syndrome is to avoid the foods that trigger it.*

Common Nutrition Problems and Tips

Temporary hair loss or hair shedding

Causes: Rapid weight loss and insufficient protein intake. Also can occur due to deficiencies in iron, biotin, zinc, /or essential fatty acids.

Prevention tips:

- Consume the recommended amount of protein (60-80 g/day).
- Take 300 mcg. of biotin.

Constipation

Cause: Not getting enough fluids or fiber

Prevention tips:

- Eat fiber-rich foods such as vegetables and some fruits.
- Drink plenty of water (48-64 oz. daily).
- Exercise regularly (at least 150 minutes a week).
- Take a fiber supplement, such as Bene-fiber or Metamucil.

Diarrhea

Causes: Eating fatty foods, lactose intolerance, dumping syndrome

Prevention tips:

- Limit or avoid products with lactose, such as milk. Replace with unsweetened, dairy-free milk alternatives (almond, oat, coconut, or soy).
- Eat slowly and chew thoroughly.
- Consume fluids separate from meals.
- Avoid sugary, fatty, and spicy foods.
- Limit or avoid sugar alcohols such as sorbitol or xylitol.
- Limit or avoid beverages with caffeine, such as coffee.

Weight Loss Surgery Resources

Websites and apps

- American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery - www.asmbs.org
- Bariatric Support Centers International - www.bariatricsupportcenter.com
- Obesity Action Coalition - www.obesityaction.org
- Obesity Help - www.obesityhelp.com
- Bariatric Pal (app) - www.bariatricpal.com
- Baritastic (app) - www.baritastic.com
- MyFitnessPal (app) - www.myfitnesspal.com
- Loyola's exercise program for bariatric patients by John Graham - http://youtu.be/Oqf5o2OW3XM

Products, protein, vitamins, and recipes

- Bariatric Eating - www.bariatriceating.com
- Bariatric Choice - www.bariatricchoice.com
- Bariatric Pantry - www.bariatricpantry.com
- Chef Dave - www.chefdave.com
- Unjury and Opurity - www.unjury.comCelebrate
- Vitamins - www.celebratevitamins.com

Books

- *The Emotional First Aid Kit: A Practical Guide to Life after Weight Loss Surgery* by Cynthia Alexander
- *The Success Habits of Weight Loss Surgery Patients* (available in Spanish) by Colleen M. Cook
- *Exodus from Obesity: The Guide to Long-Term Success After Weight Loss Surgery* by Paula F. Peck
- *Weight Loss Surgery for Dummies* by Marina S. Kurian
- *Weight Loss Surgery: Finding the This Person Hiding Inside You* by Barbara Thompson
- *The Real Skinny on Weight Loss Surgery* by Louis Flancbaum, MD
- *Recipes for Life After Weight Loss Surgery and The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Well After Weight Loss Surgery* by Margaret Furtado, MS, RD

Notes

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