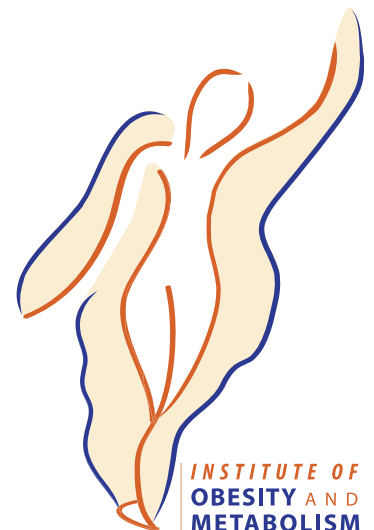


# A guide to eating and drinking after Sleeve Gastrectomy

Information for patients and carers



A practical guide to changes in eating and drinking after sleeve  
gastrectomy surgery



INSTITUTE OF  
OBESITY AND  
METABOLISM

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 3  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How the sleeve gastrectomy helps you to lose weight</li><li>• What the sleeve gastrectomy can't do</li></ul>                   |    |
| Golden rules for eating and drinking   | 4  |
| Challenging foods  | 5  |
| What should I eat after surgery?   | 5  |
| Post-op Diet   | 6  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stage 1: Liquids</li><li>• Stage 2: Blended / Pureed</li><li>• Stage 3: Soft texture</li><li>• Stage 4: Normal foods</li></ul> |    |
| Frequently asked questions   | 10 |
| Possible problems and solutions  | 11 |
| Contact details and further information  | 12 |

## **Introduction**

A sleeve gastrectomy is an effective tool to help people lose weight. Many people find it helps them make the necessary long-term changes to their diet to lose weight and keep it off. However, it isn't a 'quick fix' or a certainty that you will lose weight. Successful weight loss will be entirely down to you making good dietary choices and increasing your physical activity.

This booklet will guide you through the post-operative stages step-by-step and the golden rules for eating and drinking long term in order to lose weight successfully and maintain good nutritional health. Please read the entire booklet before your operation and approach a member of your treatment team with any questions you may have.

You should ensure that all your questions have been answered before you sign the consent form.

## **How the sleeve gastrectomy helps you to lose weight**

The sleeve gastrectomy helps you to lose weight by doing two things. Firstly, by significantly reducing the size of your stomach you will feel satisfied or 'full' after very small portions of food. Secondly, the operation reduces levels of hunger hormones in the body, reducing your appetite. Many patients report that following this operation they feel less like eating and are satisfied much sooner and for longer after a meal.

When combined with a healthy, balanced, low fat, low sugar diet this results in significant weight loss that is likely to be maintained long term providing you follow the golden rules for eating and drinking post-op and engage in regular physical activity.

## **What the sleeve gastrectomy can't do**

It is important to realise that we don't always eat because we are hungry. We might eat out of habit or because we have learned to turn to food as a comfort when we are bored, upset, or even happy. This 'head hunger' does not disappear with surgery and you must learn to overcome this if you want to be successful with your weight loss.

If you feel that a lot of your eating or drinking is not triggered by hunger then it may be helpful to speak to someone who is specially trained to assist you in developing alternative coping strategies. This will help to ensure that you get the best possible result from your weight loss surgery. Speak to your dietitian or surgeon about this who can provide you with further information.

It is also important to remember that although the surgery will help you to lose weight by reducing portion sizes and reducing appetite, it is you that chooses what you eat and drink. Long-term success after sleeve gastrectomy will depend upon you making healthy choices, following a balanced diet and including exercise on a regular basis.

## Golden rules for eating and drinking after a sleeve gastrectomy

- **Regular meals** Have **3 or less** small, regular, healthy balanced meals a day. Avoid snacking between meals unless you really need to due to hunger.
- **Eat slowly** Meals should take you no less than 20 minutes to finish. Put a small amount of food in your mouth at a time and wait 1 minute after swallowing before taking another mouthful. Eating at a table without any distractions and putting down cutlery between mouthfuls can help.
- **Chew food well** Chew each mouthful to a paste before swallowing. This can take at least 20 chews per mouthful.
- **Small portions** Your meals should be no larger than the size of a 'side plate' or 'tea plate'. We recommend that you switch to using one of these plates long term to help you control your portions.
- **Protein, Vegetables, Carbohydrates** This is the order in which you should eat from your plate. Protein is the most important part so eat this first in case you become full before you finish. Carbohydrates are least important so eat these last and don't worry if you can't finish them.
- **Do not overeat** Do not aim to eat until you are 'full'. Try to stop just before you reach this point to avoid overeating. Long-term overeating on a regular basis can stretch the stomach, which will affect your weight loss.
- **No drinking with meals** Try to drink half an hour before and after meals but not at the same time. There is not enough room in your stomach for both and this may make you feel sick. Aim to sip throughout the day between meals.
- **No more fizz** Avoid all fizzy drinks as these can create pressure in the stomach and cause discomfort and stretching.
- **Choose low calorie drinks** For example; water, no added sugar squash, tea, coffee (without sugar).
- **Healthy balanced diet** Follow a diet based on 'Healthy Eating' guidelines that is low in fat and sugar and rich in lean protein and fibre (e.g. lean meat or fish, vegetables, whole grains).

## Challenging foods

There are some foods that some people find more difficult to eat after a sleeve gastrectomy. These include chewy meats, white bread, rice, fibrous fruit and vegetables, nuts and seeds. These should be avoided at the beginning and re-introduced slowly once a 'normal' diet has been established. If you find something is not tolerated at first then do not cut it out altogether – your stomach will go on adapting for months after surgery. Try the food again 2 - 4 weeks later and you may find that it is better tolerated.

If you still find some foods more difficult, you might want to try some alternatives that tend to be better tolerated. The guide 'Healthy Eating after Bariatric Surgery' will give you some suggestions for what to choose in order to keep your diet healthy and nutritionally well balanced.

## **What should I eat after surgery?**

The following advice is designed to reduce the likelihood of any complications following surgery. It is therefore very important that you follow this advice closely. There are 4 stages. Do not be tempted to skip stages or rush through them. The advice is designed to help you get all the nutrients you need while allowing your new stomach to heal up and adapt to the changes made.

We recommend that you spend 2 weeks each at stages 1 and 2 and at least 1 week at stage 3 before returning to normal foods. **This is very important as moving on to solids too early can affect the healing of your stomach and increase the risk of complications.**

After this you can be led by your body and how you are feeling. Do not try to copy or follow anyone else who has had a sleeve gastrectomy as everyone is different. If you progress too quickly and then struggle, go back to the previous stage for a few days more. You should aim to be eating 'normal' textured foods approximately 2 months after your operation.

### **Don't be alarmed by small portions!**

Immediately after surgery your stomach will be swollen. This means that at first you will feel full on very small portions (1 – 2 tablespoons). Some people find this alarming and worry that they will not be able to eat 'normal' food again. Please be reassured that this will improve as swelling goes down and you adapt to your new stomach. Try not to panic and just take little and often until you can manage a little more. You are aiming to gradually build up to 3 small meals a day.

### **Immediately after your surgery, once your surgeon has advised that you may sip freely:**

Commence stage 1 as described below. You should have been asked to commence some vitamins and minerals. If you have these in a chewable and/or soluble form you may begin taking these now. If not you can try to crush them. If you find this too difficult it is ok to begin taking them as soon as you are able to swallow them whole (usually stage 3).

## Stage one – Fluid Phase (first 2 weeks after surgery)

- All drinks should be smooth (no bits or lumps) and be able to be sucked through a straw.
- Start with sips and if these feel comfortable, gradually increase the amount you take in one go. Be careful not to gulp your drinks as this may result in vomiting.
- Aim to have a minimum of 2-2 ½ litres (3-4 pints) of fluid each day to avoid becoming dehydrated. *At least 1-1.5 litres of this should be nutritious liquids (see below).*
- Avoid all fizzy drinks.
- While it is fine to drink tea, coffee, squash, water etc. you should make sure these are in addition to any drinks with nutritional content (see below), *not instead of.*

### Nutritious liquids:

- Skimmed or semi-skimmed milk fortified with skimmed milk powder (1-2 tablespoons per 200ml)
- Build-Up, Complan (or own-brand equivalents) – please note that these supplements are suitable for diabetics in the quantities prescribed below.
- Slimfast
- Smooth soup (homemade or tinned) fortified with 1-2 tablespoons skimmed milk powder.
- Smoothies. (Fruit blended with milk or yoghurt) Homemade will be best. Shop-bought varieties will be too high in sugar.
- Unsweetened fruit juice (limit to 1-2 small glasses a day and dilute 50:50 with water)

### Example meal plan

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Breakfast     | Fruit smoothie (200ml)  |
| Mid morning   | Fruit juice (diluted 50:50 with water) (200ml)  |
| Lunch         | Complan or Build-Up or glass semi-skimmed milk including 2 tbsp skimmed milk powder (200ml) |
| Mid Afternoon | Slimfast (200ml)  |
| Dinner        | Fortified soup (200ml)  |
| Supper        | Build-Up or Complan (200ml)   |

(Plus water/ tea/coffee/ low calorie drinks in between for hydration)

**When you feel ready, move on to Stage 2 for 1-2 weeks....**

## Stage two – Soft Blended/ Puree (weeks 3 and 4 after surgery)

- It is still important to avoid lumps at this stage. Make sure foods are blended well.
- The texture of your foods at this stage should be like yoghurt.
- Have 4-6 small meals a day. If you can only manage very little (less than 4 tablespoons) then try to have something every 2 hours (this is at the beginning only).
- Start with about 2-3 tablespoons per meal and increase this gradually if and when this feels comfortable to about 4-6 tablespoons.
- Chew well and eat slowly. Stop as soon as you feel full.
- Make sure you include a **protein source** at each meal. This is important to help your recovery and to keep you feeling full.

### Meal ideas and suggestions (Stage 2)

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Breakfast     | Low fat yoghurt or fromage frais<br>½ -1 soggy weetabix or ready brek (use plenty of warm milk to make runny)<br>Homemade fruit smoothie (fruit blended with yoghurt or milk)   |
| Mid morning   | Blended tinned fruit (unsweetened)<br>Low fat yoghurt or fromage frais<br>Sugar-free custard or low calorie dessert   |
| Lunch         | Thick, smooth soup (add skimmed milk powder if it doesn't contain meat, fish, chicken or lentils)<br>Pureed baked beans and mashed potato<br>Pureed fish in sauce with mashed potato<br>Pureed meat/chicken/fish stew with pureed vegetables and mash<br>Pureed pasta with cheese and vegetable sauce |
| Mid afternoon | As mid morning  |
| Dinner        | As lunch  |

**When you feel ready, move on to Stage 3....**

## **Stage three – Soft texture (weeks 5 and 6 after surgery)**

- The texture you are aiming for now is mashed food that you could eat with just a fork or spoon. Food should fall apart when pressed with a fork. If it does not, it is not soft enough.
- You **do not** need to add any extra milk, fruit juice, or other nutritious liquids any more as you can now have regular foods. Remember that you now need to limit your intake of liquid calories wherever possible.
- Lumps are now allowed! It is important you chew all food well and take your time.
- You should reduce the frequency of meals to 3-4 per day (or 3 plus a snack) and avoid eating in between. Try to establish a routine for having 3 meals a day, even if you are not hungry initially at these times. This will help you to lose weight in the long term.

## **Meal ideas and suggestions (Stage 2)**

### **Breakfast**

½ cup low sugar cereal (**not** muesli) with skimmed or semi-skimmed milk

### **Lunch or Evening Meal**

Scrambled eggs

Baked beans

Minced meat or turkey (e.g. in a cottage or shepherds pie, or bolognaise sauce)

Fish in sauce or fish pie

Soft ready meals e.g. cauliflower cheese, lasagne, macaroni cheese

.....with soft (overcooked) pasta, cous cous or mash potato

.....and soft (overcooked) vegetables

### **Snack ideas**

- Low fat yoghurt
- Low fat fromage frais
- Stewed or soft tinned fruit
- Cottage cheese
- Sugar-free mousse/custard

**When you feel ready, move on to Stage 4....**



## **Stage four – Normal texture (approximately 6-8 weeks after surgery)**

- Now aim for 3 meals a day and 1-2 small snacks between your meals if needed.
- You **do not** need to add any extra milk, fruit juice, or other nutritious liquids any more as you can now have regular foods. Remember that you now need to limit your intake of liquid calories wherever possible.
- It might be tempting to skip meals if you aren't hungry as a way to speed up weight loss but this will result in you developing unhelpful eating behaviours, eating too quickly due to hunger or eating too much at your next meal.
- You should try to include all types of textures now (remembering to chew really well). If it is a new food, put only a very small amount in your mouth and chew very well.

You can now refer to the booklet '**Healthy Eating after Bariatric Surgery**' for further guidance around how to eat once you have completed the post-op diet.

### **Hunger and appetite**

You may find you are much less hungry due to changes in hormone levels resulting from your operation. It is still important to have 3 meals a day - you need the nutrients! It might be tempting to skip meals if you aren't hungry as a way to speed up weight loss but this can result in you becoming malnourished or developing unhelpful eating behaviours. Hair loss can result as a consequence of undernourishment after weight loss surgery. This is usually a sign of general undernourishment as opposed to a specific vitamin or mineral deficiency.

For this reason, you should be aiming to eat a healthy balanced diet in the long-term after your operation. If you are struggling to eat all of your meal, eat the protein portion of the meal first, then the carbohydrate portion followed by the vegetables.

You should try to include all types of textures now (remembering to chew really well). If it is a new food, put only a very small amount in your mouth and chew extra well.

### **Fluids**

As your diet becomes more solid and you progress through the stages, it is still important to maintain your fluid intake. Suitable choices would include water, no-added sugar squash, tea and coffee and up to half a litre of skimmed or semi-skimmed milk per day. Remember you should avoid fizzy drinks.

You should not drink with your meals – you may find this difficult at first particularly if you are used to drinking with your meals. However, your new stomach is not big enough to cope with this any more and if you do eat and drink together, you may vomit. Aim to wait 30 minutes after a meal before drinking.

## **Frequently asked questions**

### **Are there any foods I should avoid after a sleeve gastrectomy?**

You should be able to eat most foods after a sleeve gastrectomy, and the diet we recommend you follow in the long-term is a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of lean protein and fibre. To get the best weight loss outcome you must limit your intake of high fat and sugar foods as described above under 'What the sleeve gastrectomy can't do'.

The only other item we would recommend you avoid is fizzy drinks of any kind as much as possible as they can create pressure in the stomach causing pain and stretching.

As explained above, some foods will be more challenging to eat than others. This does not mean you should avoid them. As much as possible, try to consume solid textures that require plenty of chewing as these will help you to feel fuller for longer.

### **Can I drink alcohol after a sleeve gastrectomy?**

It is not recommended that you drink alcohol for the first two months after the operation. It is likely that you will feel the effects of the alcohol much more quickly than before. Take special care when driving as it may affect your legal limit and your reaction speed.

Remember that alcohol is very high in calories (particularly alco-pops and stronger wines or lagers) and contains few other nutrients (also known as 'empty calories'). It can also stimulate appetite, which is another reason not to limit your intake.

### **Why should I avoid sugar and too much fat afterwards?**

Avoiding foods high in fat and sugar will also help you stick to a healthy diet and optimise your long-term weight loss.

### **Will I need to take vitamins after my operation?**

It is recommended that you take some additional vitamin and mineral supplements after this operation for at least 2 years post-op.

The reason for this is that during this period you will be losing weight and consuming only very small portions, so your diet may not be able to provide all the nutrients that you require. You will be instructed on what take when you leave the hospital after your surgery.

## **Possible problems and solutions after a sleeve gastrectomy**

### **Vomiting**

You should not expect to be sick after a sleeve gastrectomy. If you are, it is likely you have either:

- Eaten too much
- Eaten too quickly
- Not chewed the food enough – remember to chew to a paste before swallowing.
- Had a drink too near to the meal.

Ask yourself if any of these could be likely causes and try to avoid repeating the ‘mistake’ at the next meal. It can take a number of weeks – months to learn how to adapt your eating so try not to panic if you don’t get the hang of it straight away.

If you continue to be sick and it cannot be explained by any of the more common causes above, you should contact your surgeon or GP as soon as possible.

### **Constipation**

If you are suffering with this, check you are drinking enough fluid. You should have at least 2 litres a day. Try to choose more high fibre foods such as wholegrain products and include plenty of fruit and vegetables. Regular exercise will also help to alleviate constipation. If constipation persists then you can safely take laxatives such as Resource Optifibre, milk of magnesia or Senna. Speak to your pharmacist or GP if you are unsure.

### **What to do if food gets ‘stuck’?**

This may happen if you have eaten a food that was too solid, eaten too fast or too much, or as a result of eating more ‘challenging’ foods. This will feel uncomfortable and you may wretch or vomit.

It usually resolves itself, but you can try repeatedly swallowing small quantities of cold sparkling water or Diet Coke, as the fizz may help to dislodge the lump. If the trouble persists, please contact your surgeon or GP as soon as possible. In an emergency you should attend your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

## **Where can I get more information?**

### **The British Obesity Surgery Patient Association**

[www.bospa.org](http://www.bospa.org)

### **Weight Loss Surgery Information**

[www.wlsinfo.org.uk](http://www.wlsinfo.org.uk)

### **Weight Concern**

[www.weightconcern.com](http://www.weightconcern.com)

## **Contact Information**

If you have any queries relating to diet following your surgery or about this booklet please contact your dietitian:

Kathryn Waller

**Specialist Bariatric Dietitian**

[kathryn.m.waller@gmail.com](mailto:kathryn.m.waller@gmail.com)

If your query is of a medical or surgical nature, please contact your surgeon or GP. In the case of a medical emergency please contact your nearest accident and emergency department.