

Soft Diet After Esophagectomy

Nutrition is very important to help you heal and prevent weight loss after surgery. Some weight loss can be normal after surgery, but you need to check your weight each day to make sure you are not losing too much weight. Your health care provider may recommend that you eat a gastrointestinal soft diet, also called a GI Soft Diet. This type of diet includes foods that are easy to chew, swallow and digest, and is the next step after a full liquid diet. These foods may be mashed, chopped, ground, or pureed.

Guidelines to Follow While Eating a GI Soft Diet

Heartburn or acid reflux can be a problem after surgery. Here are some tips to help reduce this problem:

- Eat smaller meals throughout the day. Try to eat 6 small meals each day.
- Keep portion sizes small. You may only be able to eat around 4 ounces of food at each sitting. Do not eat any more than 8 ounces at a time.
- Take small bites and chew your food slowly. Add sour cream or cream cheese to foods to help with swallowing.
- Drink most of your liquids in-between meals. Drink a small amount of liquids when you eat a meal or snack.
- Do not eat while lying down. Sit upright in a chair to eat and drink. Do not eat before bedtime. Wait at least 2 to 3 hours to lie down after you eat. Elevate the head of your bed 6 to 8 inches.
- Do not eat these foods:
 - ▶ Fatty / fried
 - ▶ Spicy / tomato products
 - ▶ Chocolate, peppermint or spearmint
 - ▶ Citrus foods (orange, lemon)

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Stomach Pain

You may have stomach pain if you:

- Do not chew foods well
- Swallow air
- Eat too fast, too much, or too often
- Drink and eat at the same time
- Eat or drink very hot or very cold foods and beverages

To decrease your risk of stomach pain:

- Completely chew each bite of food.
- Do not drink while eating and do not gulp when drinking.
- Do not eat sugary foods.
- Eat foods and drink beverages at room temperature.
- Use a smaller plate, such as a salad plate, to help limit your portion sizes.
- Put down your spoon or fork between bites to help slow your eating.

Bloating and Gas

Common reasons for bloating and gas include swallowing too much air and eating gassy foods. Here are some ways to help prevent bloating and gas:

- Do not use straws, chew gum, or suck on ice or candy.
- Do not talk while eating.
- Do not drink large amounts of sodas or carbonated beverages for 12 weeks after surgery.
- Avoid gassy foods such as broccoli, onions, garlic, cabbage and beans.
- Eat small amounts to help prevent both pain and bloating.

Dumping Syndrome

If you eat a large meal, eat too much sugar, drink fluids during meals, or eat too fast, the food may be dumped too quickly into your small intestine. This is called dumping syndrome. It can cause abdominal (belly) cramping, stomach pain, nausea, and diarrhea. It can also make you feel weak, dizzy, and flushed. These signs often occur within 30 minutes of eating.

To help prevent or reduce problems with dumping syndrome:

- Talk to your health care provider if you think you have signs of dumping syndrome.
- Rest for 15 to 30 minutes after eating to slow the movement of food going into the small intestine.
- Keep a journal of what you eat for a few weeks after surgery. Note any side effects you have, such as dizziness, nausea, and diarrhea. Use your journal to make any needed changes to your diet.
- Add one new food to your diet at a time. This will help you know food you can tolerate and food to avoid.
- Limit foods high in sugar. You may use a sugar substitute and foods made with a sugar substitute.
- Keep portion sizes small and limit the volume of food eaten at one time.
- Sip your drinks slowly and do not drink a large amount of fluids with meals.

Delayed Gastric Emptying

Your stomach will empty its contents into the small intestine more slowly after surgery. This is called delayed gastric emptying. This will cause you to feel full more quickly. You may also have nausea, weight loss, and abdominal discomfort. You will be discharged on a motility agent (medicine to help move food through your gastrointestinal (GI) tract), such as Metoclopramide or Reglan.

To help prevent or reduce problems with delayed gastric emptying:

- Eat small, frequent meals. Aim to eat 6 times per day.
- Chew your food well and eat slowly.
- Decrease (limit) the amount of high-fiber foods you eat.
- Decrease (limit) the amount of high-fat foods you eat, especially fried and greasy foods.

Here are the diet guidelines to follow for the GI Soft Diet

Phase 1: Follow this diet for 2 to 3 weeks.

Food Group	Choose	Do NOT Choose
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Milk (skim, 1%, 2% or whole) • Non-dairy milk • Juice without pulp • Creamer, Half and Half • Nutritional Supplement drinks such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost • Ensure • Carnation Instant Breakfast • Resource • Breeze • Broth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee and tea (can have small amounts, limit to 8 to 12 ounces) • Fruit juices with pulp • Alcoholic beverages • Carbonated (fizzy) drinks - avoid for a total of 12 weeks after surgery • Colas and other drinks with caffeine (can have small amounts, limit to 8 to 12 ounces per day and allow cola to sit for 5 minutes before drinking)
Breads and Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thin hot cereals such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grits • Oatmeal • Cream of wheat/rice • Porridge • Pasta, macaroni, noodles • Dry, ready to eat cereals softened with milk or other liquid (soggy) • Pancakes or French toast, well-moistened with syrup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread or bread products • Sandwiches • Pizza • Rice • Granola • Crispy grain foods with hard edges (snack chips, crackers) • High fiber cereals or bran cereals • Cereals with nuts, seeds, berries or raisins • Whole grain pastas • Crispy fried food, such as grilled cheese

Food Group	Choose	Do NOT Choose
Meats / Meat Substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moist ground or finely diced meats, including meatloaf • Hamburger or cheeseburger without a bun • Sloppy joe without a bun • Chicken, egg, or tuna salad without raw fruits or vegetables, nuts, seeds, or dried fruits • Poached, scrambled, or soft-cooked eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peanut butter • Tough, chewy, stringy, or fatty meats • Breaded or fried meats/fish, or fried eggs • Char-grilled meats • Dry grissly meat • Meats with casings (hot dogs, sausage) • Seasoned, cured or processed smoked meats (lunch meats) • Shellfish • Nuts • Seeds • Beans
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked, canned or mashed fruits without skins, seeds or fibers • Applesauce • Banana • Avocados • Fruit juice without pulp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw fruits • Dried fruits • Coconut • Fruits with seeds or tough skin (such as orange or lemon) • Juice with pulp • Pineapple • Fruit leather, fruit roll-ups, fruit snacks
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked, canned or mashed vegetables, without skins or seeds • Potatoes without skin • Vegetable juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, or other fibrous cooked vegetables • Raw vegetables, stems or seeds • Corn • Deep fried vegetables • Dried beans, peas and legumes/beans • Sauerkraut and pickled vegetables

Food Group	Choose	Do NOT Choose
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk (skim, 1%, 2% or whole) • Cheese • Smooth yogurt • Pudding • Smooth ice cream • Cottage cheese • Custard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy mixed with fruits, seeds or nuts
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain cakes or soft/chewy cookies • Pudding • Custards • Sherbet • Gelatin (Jell-O) • Whipped fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crunchy or hard cookies • Chewy candy or desserts • Desserts with nuts, seeds, fruits, coconut, dried fruits
Snacks and other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marshmallows • Butter • Mustard • Mayonnaise • Honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jam or jelly with seeds or fruit pieces • Whole spices • Hot sauce • Fresh herbs • Popcorn • Potato chips • Corn or taco chips • Chocolate • Peppermint or spearmint

Phase 2: Advance to this diet after swallowing foods in phase 1 well for 2 to 3 weeks. Follow this diet for 4 to 6 weeks.

Food Group	Choose	Do NOT Choose
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Milk (skim, 1%, 2% or whole) • Non-dairy milk • Juice without pulp • Creamer, Half and Half • Nutritional Supplements drinks such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost • Ensure • Carnation Instant Breakfast • Resource • Breeze • Broth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee and tea (can have small amounts, limit to 8 to 12 ounces) • Fruit juices with pulp • Alcoholic beverages • Carbonated (fizzy) drinks - avoid for a total of 12 weeks after surgery • Colas and other drinks with caffeine (can have small amounts, limit to 8 to 12 ounces per day and allow cola to sit for 5 minutes before drinking)
Breads and Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thin hot cereals such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grits • Oatmeal • Cream of wheat/rice • Porridge • Pasta, macaroni, noodles • Dry, ready to eat cereals softened with milk or other liquid • Pancakes or French toast, well-moistened with syrup • White rice • Soft bread products • Sandwiches • Grilled cheese • Pizza (soft crust) • Wraps/tortillas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain breads • Chewy or crusty breads (such as bagels, French bread, or toast) • Bread with nuts, seeds, berries or raisins • Wild or brown rice • Granola • Crispy grain foods with hard edges (snack chips, crackers) • High fiber cereals or bran cereals • Cereals with nuts, seeds, berries or raisins • Whole grain pastas

Food Group	Choose	Do NOT Choose
Meats / Meat Substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moist ground or finely diced meats, including meatloaf • Chicken, egg, or tuna salad without raw fruits or vegetables, nuts, seeds, or dried fruits • Tender chicken, beef, turkey or pork without skin or bones • Fish without bones • Smooth peanut butter • Eggs • Tofu • Hamburger, cheeseburger, or sloppy joe on a bun • Beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough, chewy, stringy, or fatty meats • Breaded or fried meats/ fish, or fried eggs • Char-grilled meats • Dry grissly meat • Meats with casings (hot dogs, sausage) • Seasoned, cured or processed smoked meats (lunch meats) • Shellfish • Nuts • Seeds • Chunky peanut butter
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked, canned or mashed fruits without skins, seeds or fibers • Applesauce • Banana • Avocados • Fruit juice without pulp • Soft, fresh fruits without skins or seeds • Fruit leather, fruit roll-ups, fruit snacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crunchy raw fruits with hard edges • Dried fruits • Coconut • Fruits with seeds or tough skin (such as orange or lemon) • Juice with pulp • Pineapple
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked, canned or mashed vegetables, without skins or seeds • Potatoes without skin • Vegetable juice • Shredded lettuce • Dried beans, peas and legumes/beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw vegetables, stems or seeds • Corn • Deep fried vegetables • Sauerkraut and pickled vegetables

Food Group	Choose	Do NOT Choose
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk (skim, 1%, 2% or whole) • Cheese • Smooth yogurt • Pudding • Smooth ice cream • Cottage cheese • Custard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy mixed with fruits, seeds or nuts
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain cakes or soft/chewy cookies • Pudding • Custards • Sherbet • Gelatin (Jell-O) • Whipped fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desserts with nuts, seeds, fruits, coconut, dried fruits
Snacks and other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marshmallows • Butter • Mustard • Mayonnaise • Honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jam or jelly with seeds or fruit pieces • Whole spices • Hot sauce • Fresh herbs • Popcorn • Potato chips • Corn or taco chips • Chocolate • Peppermint or spearmint

Tube Feeding

If you have a feeding tube and are receiving tube feeding formula for nutrition, the amount of tube feeding formula you receive will be decreased (lowered) as your diet is advanced (increased). Your dietitian will help you know when you should stop your tube feedings.