

Eating well after your surgery

To be issued on admission for surgery.

This is general advice only – specific surgical procedures such as gastrointestinal or head and neck surgery may require individualised guidance.

Eating a healthy balanced diet after surgery will help you recover more quickly. Eating too little may delay your recovery and may affect your energy levels. Try to drink and eat as soon as you are able to following your surgery. Your healthcare team will give you medication to control any sickness to help you eat and drink more quickly.

You may find eating small frequent meals and snacks or nourishing drinks may be easier to manage than 3 larger meals a day.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, the S

Try to have foods from each group shown – most of your food should be fruit and vegetables, and starchy carbohydrates with some dairy and protein foods. Food and drinks high in fat and sugar should form the smallest part of your overall diet – it is OK to have these occasionally, but try to limit them for overall health.



Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Milk and dairy foods

Sugary drinks and/or sugar

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables provide you with fibre, vitamins and minerals to help your body repair. Try to include fruit and/or vegetables with all meals and snacks – aim for at least 5 portions a day. A portion is roughly what will fit in your hand. Try bananas, apples, pears or oranges and carrots, salad or peas.

Starchy foods

Starchy foods provide you with fibre and energy. Starchy foods should form the basis of each meal, and provide the energy required to help with a faster recovery. Fill about a third of your plate with starchy foods like bread, chapatti, breakfast cereal, pasta, rice, potatoes, etc. Where possible choose wholegrain varieties as a healthier option.

Dairy

Milk and dairy products provide the body with calcium for healthy teeth and bones. These can be included as drinks or snacks on their own such as a glass of milk or a pot of yoghurt. Alternatively, many meals and snacks contain dairy foods as a key element, for example milk on cereal, in drinks or sauces. Try to include 2 portions a day.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other sources of protein

Protein is important for building strong muscles. Improving your strength will help you move around after your surgery. Protein is found in lentils, pulses, tofu, eggs, meat, chicken and fish. Try to have protein with at least two meals every day, for example an egg sandwich at lunchtime and grilled salmon with dinner. After your surgery, protein is needed to help your wounds to heal.

Suggested portions of protein include:

- a piece of meat (80g or about the size of a pack of cards)
- a fillet of fish (140g or about the size of a cheque book)
- 4 tablespoons of cooked pulses or half a standard tin of baked beans.

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Fluid

Fluid is important. You should drink 6-8 cups or glasses (1.5-2.0 litres) every day.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients for your body. Eating a balanced diet will provide all the vitamins and minerals that most people need, so taking extra vitamins and minerals is not usually required. If you have been diagnosed with a specific nutrient deficiency or you have any concerns, speak to your healthcare team.

Further advice

Ask to speak to a dietitian if you:

- are struggling with your appetite
- are underweight
- are very overweight
- have special dietary requirements due to health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease. You may require personalised advice to improve your nutritional intake.

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Contact information:

Dietitian.....

Nurse

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