

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

Dietitian Name _____

Phone _____

An esophagectomy (ee-soff-uh-JEK-tuh-mee) is surgery to remove the esophagus. After this type of surgery, it is common to have some problems eating for a few months.

What can I expect after surgery?

For the first few months after surgery, you may have problems such as:

- Weight loss
- Dumping syndrome (nausea, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, light-headedness)
- Excess gas
- Trouble swallowing

Your diet plan after surgery is designed to reduce discomfort and allow you to enjoy eating.

What type of diet will I have?

You will have many types of diets. Your diet will change slowly based on your rate of recovery and how well you can tolerate food. The amount of liquid that you are allowed to have at one time will change based on your doctor's recommendation. In general, your diet plan will go through the following stages:

1. Clear liquid diet (for the first few days after surgery)
2. Full liquid diet
3. Soft diet

Each person tolerates food in a different way. Your doctor will change your diet plan based on your progress after surgery.

How can I help myself?

Follow the tips below to make eating more comfortable and enjoyable.

To Reduce Discomfort

- Eat small, frequent meals (6 to 8 per day). This helps you get all the nutrients you need.
- Take small bites and chew your food well. This helps you to swallow and digest your food.
- Drink most of your liquids between meals. Limit liquids with meals to ½ cup (4 ounces). Limit liquids with snacks to 1 cup (8 ounces).

- If you eat sweets, eat them at the end of your meal. Sweets are digested more quickly than other foods. Eating sweets first could lead to low blood sugar, hypoglycemia, or dumping syndrome.
- Choose foods that are soft and moist because they can be easier to digest. Stay away from gummy foods, such as bananas, untoasted bread, and bread products.
- Sit up straight when you eat. This way gravity can help food move through your digestive tract. After you eat, keep sitting for 30 to 60 minutes.
- Eat your last meal or snack at least 2 to 3 hours before you go to bed.

Stay away from the following foods and drinks if they produce reflux:

- Alcoholic drinks
- Caffeine
- Chocolate
- Citrus fruits
- Tomatoes

To Avoid Gas

Do **NOT** use a straw, chew gum, or smoke because these activities make you swallow air. Keeping extra air out of your digestive tract helps to reduce gas.

Stay away from the following foods and drinks that produce gas:

- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Corn
- Dried beans
- Dried peas
- Lentils
- Onions
- Sodas (carbonated drinks)

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

Clear Liquid Diet

Right after surgery, you will follow a clear liquid diet, which includes:

- Clear juice (apple, grape, and cranberry)
- Clear broth (chicken, beef, and vegetable)
- Flavored gelatin (such as Jell-O®)
- Tea and coffee
- Italian ice
- Popsicle® ice pops

Make sure to check with your doctor for the amount of liquid you are allowed at one time. The amount varies from patient to patient, based on your recovery from surgery. Sodas (carbonated drinks) are **NOT** allowed for 6 to 8 weeks after surgery. After this time, you can try sodas in small amounts. Caffeinated drinks can be introduced at this time as tolerated.

Full Liquid Diet

A full liquid diet contains all the liquids of the clear liquid diet in addition to:

- Blended yogurt (vanilla or custard style without fruit or seeds)
- Cream of Wheat®, Cream of Rice® cereal, and grits
- Ice cream (no chocolate and without fruits, nuts, or seeds)

- Frozen yogurt (no chocolate and without fruits, nuts, or seeds)
- Instant breakfast drinks and nutrition supplements, i.e. Boost®, Ensure® (no chocolate flavors)
- Milk (no chocolate)
- Pudding (no chocolate, rice, or coconut flavored)
- Sherbet
- Strained cream soups (NOT tomato or broccoli)

Note: Dairy products may cause diarrhea right after surgery. Dairy products include milk, ice cream, and pudding. You may need to stay away from milk products at first. Try them in small amounts as you advance your diet. You can also try products that are reduced lactose or lactose-free.

Soft Diet

A soft diet consists of bland, low fiber, lower fat, soft foods and drinks.

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

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Breads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pancakes, waffles, and French toast Crackers (i.e. saltines, graham crackers, Ritz® crackers) Toasted bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Untoasted bread, bread products (i.e. bagels, hard rolls, Kaiser rolls), and crackers that contain nuts, seeds, fresh or dried fruit, coconut, or are highly seasoned (i.e. garlic or onion flavored crackers)
Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cream of Wheat, grits, oatmeal, and other cooked cereals (plain or flavored without raisins, dried fruits, or nuts) Cereals including Rice Krispies®, Cheerios®, Corn Flakes®, plain Special K® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coarse cereals such as bran, Grape-Nuts®, and granola Any cereals with fresh or dried fruit, coconut, seeds, or nuts
Potatoes and Starches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooked, peeled white or sweet potatoes Rice, barley, and pastas, such as enriched noodles, spaghetti, and macaroni 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fried potatoes and potato skins Fried, brown, or wild rice Hard and soft taco shells
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mildly flavored meat stocks Cream soups made with allowed ingredients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly seasoned soups and tomato-based soups
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooked vegetables without seeds or skins (i.e. asparagus tips, baby peas, beets, carrots, chopped spinach, green and wax beans, and winter squash) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All raw vegetables Vegetables with seeds or skins Tomatoes, tomato juice, tomato sauce, and vegetable juice (i.e. V-8®) Gas-producing vegetables (i.e. broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, cucumbers, green peppers, onions, radishes, rutabagas, sauerkraut, and turnips) Dried beans, peas, and lentils

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

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Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any canned, cooked fruits, or fruit juice (except those listed as foods to stay away from) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fresh and dried fruits • Fruits with seeds or skin, such as berries, figs, and raisins • All citrus fruits and juices • Bananas • Pineapple (fresh, juice, and canned)
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any style prepared eggs (except those listed as foods to stay away from) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried eggs • Highly seasoned eggs (i.e. deviled eggs)
Meats, Fish, Poultry, and Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finely ground or diced lean beef, lamb, pork, veal, fish, and poultry made any way except fried • Cottage and ricotta cheese • Mild cheeses such as American, brick, baby Swiss, or mozzarella • Smooth peanut butter • Vanilla and peach blended yogurt (no pieces of fruit, nuts, or seeds) • Casseroles and stews made with allowed ingredients • Grilled cheese sandwiches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough meats with gristle • Fried, highly seasoned, smoked and fatty meats, fish, or poultry such as frankfurters, lunch meats, sausage, bacon, spareribs, beef brisket, sardines, anchovies, duck, and goose • Chili and other spicy foods • Shellfish • Strongly flavored cheeses such as sharp cheese and cheese that contains peppers or other seasoning • Crunchy peanut butter • Any yogurt that contains nuts, seeds, coconut, or pieces of fruit

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

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<p>Sweets (Eat in moderation, and with a meal.) Note: If dumping syndrome occurs, you may need to stay away from these.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugar, syrup, honey, jelly, and seedless jam • Unfilled hard candies and plain candies made with allowed ingredients • Molasses • Other candy made with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jam, marmalade, and preserves • Marshmallows • Any candy that contains nuts, seeds, fresh or dried fruit, coconut, peppermint, or spearmint
<p>Desserts (Eat in moderation, and do not eat desserts or sweets by themselves.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain cakes, cookies, and cream-filled pies • All pudding and custard flavors except those in the stay away from column • Ice cream, ice milk, frozen yogurt, and sherbet • Gelatin made from allowed foods • Fruit ices and Popsicle ice pops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desserts containing chocolate, coconut, nuts, seeds, fresh or dried fruit, peppermint, or spearmint
<p>Drinks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Tea or coffee • Powdered drink mixes • Non-citrus juices such as cranberry, grape, apple, or blends of these • Nectars • Caffeinated drinks as tolerated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodas and other carbonated drinks • Alcoholic drinks • Citrus juices such as orange, grapefruit, lemon, and lime • Pineapple juice • Drinks that contain herbal ingredients, such as St. John's Wort or ginseng • Any chocolate flavored drink
<p>Fats (Eat in moderation.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter and margarine • Mayonnaise and vegetable oils • Mildly seasoned salad dressings made with allowed ingredients • Plain cream cheese • Sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly seasoned salad dressings, cream sauces, and gravies • Bacon, bacon fat, ham fat, lard, and salt pork • Fried foods • Nuts

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

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Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt, flavored extracts, condiments, spices, and herbs (depending on how your body reacts to them) • Mustard and vinegar in moderation (depending on how your body reacts to them) • Cheese Nips®, plain Goldfish® crackers • Thin pretzels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried or highly seasoned foods • Nuts, seeds, and coconut • Pickles and olives • Chili sauce, barbecue sauce, horseradish, ketchup, black pepper, chili powder, and onion and garlic seasonings • Any other strongly flavored seasoning, condiment, spice, or herb not tolerated well • Popcorn • Potato chips • Hard pretzels (i.e. sourdough) • Soft pretzels • Any food not tolerated

Your Health Education

Diet After an Esophagectomy

Sample Menu	
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup canned fruit • 2 small pancakes • 1 teaspoon margarine • 1 teaspoon jelly or syrup • ½ cup milk
Mid-morning snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 graham crackers • 1 tablespoon peanut butter • 1 teaspoon jelly • 1 cup tea
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 ounces beef patty (finely ground) • ½ cup mashed potatoes • ½ cup canned peaches • ½ cup milk • 1 teaspoon margarine
Mid-afternoon snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-6 soda crackers • 1 tablespoon cream cheese • 1 cup milk or ½ cup fruit juice
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 ounces roast chicken (finely ground) • ½ cup rice • ½ cup cooked carrots • ½ cup canned pears • 1 teaspoon margarine • ½ cup tea
Evening snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ¼ cup cottage cheese • ½ cup applesauce • 1 cup milk

To make an outpatient appointment with a Registered Dietitian, please call our number at **1-800-533-8762**. Visit our web site at <http://nutritionservices.upmc.com/Ask.htm> or send your questions to AskaDietitian@upmc.edu.

This patient education material is intended to be used in consultation with a Registered Dietitian.