



# POST-OP DIETARY GUIDELINES

## Introduction

The post-op diet is divided into 6 stages. Each stage is designed based on food consistencies, volume, and types of food. It starts with clear liquids and navigates through full liquids, pureed foods, soft foods, solid foods, and up to transition foods that will get you to your new long-term diet and out of your recovery.

We list the approximate duration of each stage in days after your surgery so that it is easy for you to keep track of when you should advance to the next stage. Each stage has a description and lists its goals. They also include tips and guidelines, lists of approved liquids and foods, recommendations for exercise, and instructions for vitamins and supplements. It is important to read everything carefully before beginning each stage to make sure you are aware of what you may and may not eat or drink.

It takes about 6 months on average to fully recover from the surgery and be able to eat almost everything you could before, although in much smaller amounts. However, we recommend taking this opportunity to reset your eating habits and change your taste buds. Make them adapt to healthier foods and before you know it, you will start craving those healthier foods! It is amazing how our body functions when you give it the proper food and nutrition. We hope that you find helpful all the information in these guidelines and if you have any questions we are always here to help and support you.

Sincerely,

The GastricSleeveRecipes.com Team

## General Recommendations

- It should be a priority at every stage to stay hydrated and drink 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day.
- Buy a food scale and measuring spoons. It is important to use exact measurements given that your new stomach can only take in a limited amount of food at every stage of the recovery. Eating more than you are supposed to will provoke discomfort and serving the right amount of food can help prevent this.
- Do not weigh yourself more than once per week. We know it can be tempting, but this tends to cause too much mental pressure. External factors such as stress and even weather can affect our weight on a specific day so weighing ourselves every week can help eliminate these inconsistencies. Pick a day of the week (we recommend Wednesdays or Thursdays) and weigh yourself every week only on that day and in the morning before having liquids or food. This will give a much more accurate and comparable measurement of your progress.
- Consult with your doctor or surgeon regarding any medications you may be taking. He or she will be able to better determine if you should stop taking them for a bit or if it is safe to continue with them. If you are currently on medication you may need to pulverize the pills during the early stages of your recovery to avoid them getting stuck or causing any pain.
- Every patient is different so don't worry if it takes you a bit longer in each stage. It is important to be patient with our bodies and learn to listen to what they need.

## POST-OP STAGES OVERVIEW

Stage	Stage Name	Duration	Days after surgery
1	Clear Liquids	5 days	1 to 5
2	Full Liquids	9 days	6 to 14
3	Pureed Foods	2 weeks	15 to 30
4	Soft Foods	1 month	30 to 60
5	Solid Foods	1 month	60 to 90
6	Transition Foods	1 to 3 months	90 to 180

**Note:** Actual duration for each stage may vary among patients. It is perfectly fine to take a bit more time in any stage before moving forward if you feel like you are not ready for it. It is also normal to go back a stage if you feel like you moved to fast. All changes in your post-op diet should be as gradual as possible.

## STAGE 1: Clear Liquids

**Duration:** 5 days

**Days:** 1 to 5 (after surgery)

**Calories:** 100 to 300 per day. Range may vary depending on your doctor's recommendations.

**Goal:** Stay hydrated by drinking 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day.

**Description:** This is the beginning stage of your healing process and the first steps towards a new and healthier you. Because your surgery is so recent, you are only allowed to drink clear liquids from the list below. There will be no meals because your body requires several days before it can perform any type of proper digestion and absorption of food. Your hunger hormones (ghrelin) are almost non-existent after surgery, which may lead you to have a low appetite. However, it is extremely important to consume liquids throughout the day to stay hydrated.

The first 3 stages of the post-op diet are the most difficult and there is no room for error or cheating. The more you follow these guidelines, the less risk of experiencing any discomfort, pain, or other types of complications.

### Approved liquids:

- Plain water.
- Clear broths such as vegetable, chicken or beef. Make sure these are low-sodium because excess sodium can lead to inflammation or swelling. We recommend buying them in the liquid form and not as stock (cubes). This is because the stock may sometimes not dissolve completely and could leave some residue in the liquid. Almost every supermarket carries their own in-house brand so you can buy that one as long as it is low sodium. Other recommended brands are:
  - Pacific Foods Organic Low-Sodium Vegetable Broth (best option)
  - Swanson Unsalted Chicken Broth
- Low sugar electrolyte drinks. Recommended brands:
  - Gatorade G2. Recommended flavors: Fruit punch, Grape, Berries. We recommend staying away from lime, lemon, orange or any citric flavor as they are a bit more acidic and can cause discomfort.
  - Propel. Recommended flavors: Grape, Berries. You can also buy Propel as a powder and mix in a bottle of water until fully dissolved.



- 100% fruit and/or vegetable juices. These should be without any added sugar or pulp. Recommended flavors:

- Apple. Recommended brands: Apple & Eve, Kirkland Apple Juice, Mott's 100% Original Apple Juice, Langers 100% Apple Juice.
- Peach or Grape. Welch's 100% White Grape and Peach Juice.
- **Maximum allowed of juice per day is 16 ounces.**
- **Juice should always be diluted with water.** Dilute juice with equal amounts of water.
- **Avoid juices with pulp.**
- Note: Juice plays an important role in your recovery during the first stages but should be discontinued later on due to its high calorie content.

- Coconut water.

- Recommended brands: Naked Juice 100% Organic Pure Coconut Water, Vita Coco Original.
- Note: If you buy other brands just make sure they don't have added sugars.
- Maximum allowed per day is 8 ounces per day due to its sugar content
- Note: Coconut water plays an important role in your recovery during the first stages but should be discontinued later on due to its high calorie content.

- Herbal tea (caffeine free and unsweetened). Recommended brands:

- TICK TOCK TEAS Original Rooibos Organic Tea, Redbush Tea
- Yogi Bedtime Herbal Tea Caffeine Free Soothing Caramel

- Sugar-free Jell-O.

- Recommended flavors: Strawberry, grape, mixed berries, or mango. Avoid lime, lemon, pineapple, or other highly acidic flavors.
- Note: Jell-O provides little to no nutrition but can help because it is the closest sensation to eating you can get during this stage. Eat slowly and in extremely small bites.

- Sugar-free popsicles.

- Recommended flavors: Strawberry, grape, or mixed berries. Avoid lime, lemon, pineapple, or other highly acidic flavors.

- Ice chips.

- Crushed or very small ice cubes. Do not swallow; let them melt in your mouth. If cold liquids cause discomfort then avoid ice chips.

### Tips and Guidelines:

- Do not drink gulps of liquids or you may experience severe discomfort. Instead, take small sips of liquids whenever you feel thirsty or at least every 15-20 minutes.
- Do not drink carbonated drinks like soda or soda water. The carbonation creates gas and can cause severe discomfort.
- Do not consume protein drinks at this stage. You will begin taking them in Stage 2.
- Do not drink through a straw as it may fill up your stomach with air and produce discomfort.
- It is important to monitor your glucose (sugar) levels (especially if you are diabetic). You may at some time feel dizziness if your glucose levels fall below your recommended level. If this happens, you may consume 4 oz of diluted fruit juice and consult with your doctor if this happens often. If you are a diabetic, check your glucose levels closely and follow your doctors' recommendations. Make sure to consult with your doctor about any adjustments in your medications and/or insulin regimen that may be needed. Juice intake should not be abused and must be diluted with water always.
- All fruit juice must be diluted with water.
- All liquids should be caffeine free and not contain any other kind of stimulant (such as in energy drinks).
- Drinking a bit of lukewarm tea in the morning helps to relax your stomach muscles.
- Do not drink coffee, even if it is decaf. Coffee is diuretic and will work against your goal of staying hydrated.
- All liquids should contain no added sugars. Juices contain natural sugar from the fruits and vegetables but it is important to make sure they have no added sugars. You can find out if they have any by reading the nutrition labels and staying away from those that list the following ingredients:
  - Cane crystals, cane sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, crystal dextrose, evaporated cane juice, fructose, fructose sweetener, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, honey, liquids fructose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sugar, white sugar
- Maintain a diet journal and begin reporting what you drink throughout the day. This way, you can keep track of what you are drinking and determine if you are meeting your fluid needs.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients avoid exercise during this stage. It is important to take it slow and keep in mind that you will already be losing a lot of weight through diet alone. It is important, however, to walk constantly during the day. Do not stay in bed all day or you may risk forming blood clots. Get up and walk around your house or block every 20-30 minutes to keep the blood flowing and your metabolism active.

**Vitamins and Supplements:** Do not consume any during this stage. You will begin taking them in Stage 2.

### Recommended liquid intake per day:

Liquid	Minimum Ounces	Maximum Ounces
Water	12	16
Clear broths	8	8
Low sugar electrolyte	8	8
100% Fruit juice	8	16
Coconut water	4	8
Herbal tea, unsweetened	4	4
Sugar-free Jell-O or popsicles	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>64</b>

There is no set meal plan or schedule for this stage. This is just a recommended scenario for the amounts of each liquid. The actual one will depend more on how you feel once you have the surgery performed.

You should drink constantly throughout the day and whenever you feel thirsty. The goal is to consume 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day. The liquids you decide to drink to fill this requirement will be up to you.

The only liquid we suggest following the recommended intake for is juice. This is because the sugar from the juice will help you maintain a certain level of energy during this stage that will help prevent slight headaches or excessive fatigue. We recommend that you do not go over the recommended limit to prevent extreme sugar intakes.

**Note from our lead nutritionist:** This stage of the post-op diet is by far the hardest. So keep in mind that once you go through it, things will only get easier. It is important, however, to be patient and stay focused on your long-term goals. The struggle for this stage does not compare to a lifetime of health and happiness. So stay strong!

## STAGE 2: Full Liquids

**Duration:** 9 days

**Days:** 6 to 14 (after surgery)

**Calories:** 400 to 750 per day

**Suggested daily meal schedule:**

- 8 ounces of liquids every 2 hours

**Goal:**

- Consume 60 grams of protein.
- Introduce supplements.
- Consume 48-64 ounces of liquids per day.

**Description:** You should continue consuming liquids only, but now you will be able to incorporate slightly thicker liquids with a wider variety of ingredients. We will add 60 grams of protein into your diet and begin taking supplements. This will give your digestive system time to heal properly and allow you to adjust to your new stomach/pouch.

It is important to keep in mind that it is common to develop new food allergies or intolerances after the surgery, with the most common being dairy. Most protein supplements on the market are dairy-based, so if you begin experiencing GI symptoms when you add them to your diet, try switching to plant-based protein sources. We give out product recommendations for both of these in the section below.

Stages 1 and 2 of the post-op diet are by far the hardest. So keep in mind that once you go through them, things will only get easier. It is important, however, to be patient and stay focused on your long-term goals. The struggle for these stages does not compare to a lifetime of health and happiness. So stay strong!

**Approved liquids:**

- All liquids approved in Stage 1 plus:
- Low-fat or skim and lactose-free milk.
- Unsweetened soy, almond, cashew or coconut milk
- Vegetable juices. Recommended brands:
  - V8 Vegetable Juice: Essential Antioxidants, Original
  - Naked Juice: Blue Machine, Protein Smoothie Double Berry
- Low-fat creamy soups. (no chunks + low sodium).
  - Suggested flavors: Vegetables, Carrot, Spinach.
- Protein drinks: (see vitamins and supplements section below for more information).
  - Certain fruits like bananas and blueberries may be blended together with protein smoothies drinks. Nut butters can also be added (max 2 tbsp per day).



## Tips and Guidelines:

- Prioritize drinking your protein first during every 2-hour period. If you are having trouble reaching the 48-64 ounce goal then prioritize the high-protein and high-calorie liquids.
- Do not drink gulps of liquids or you may experience severe discomfort.
- Do not drink carbonated drinks like soda or soda water. The carbonation creates gas and can cause severe discomfort.
- Do not drink through a straw as it may fill up your stomach with air and produce discomfort.
- It is important to monitor your glucose (sugar) levels (especially if you are diabetic). You may at some time feel dizziness if your glucose levels fall below your recommended level. If this happens, you may consume 4 oz of diluted fruit juice and consult with your doctor if this happens often. Juice intake should not be abused and must be diluted with water always.
- All fruit juice must be diluted with water. Maximum recommended amount of fruit juice per day is 12 ounces.
- All liquids should contain no added sugars. Juices contain natural sugar from the fruits and vegetables but it is important to make sure they have no added sugars.
- All liquids should be caffeine free and not contain any other kind of stimulant (such as in energy drinks).
- Do not drink coffee, even if it is decaf. Coffee is diuretic and will work against your goal of staying hydrated. It is recommended to avoid drinking coffee for at least the first three stages of your post-op diet.
- Avoid any foods that are acidic or spicy, as these may cause some discomfort or irritation.
- Buy a food scale and measuring spoons. It is very important to use the exact measurements we provide on our recipes and meal plans. Our recipes give measurements in both volume/amount and in grams so you are able to weigh everything. We use grams instead of ounces because it can be a more exact measure. The appliances that you will need are the basics of every kitchen: stove, oven, microwave, and blender.
- Do not weigh yourself more than once per week. Pick a day of the week (we recommend Wednesdays or Thursdays) and weigh yourself every week only on that day and in the morning before having liquids or food. Weighing yourself too often can create too much mental pressure.
- If you begin Stage 2 and are having trouble with full liquids then it is perfectly normal to go back to clear liquids for another day and then try again with full liquids. It is important to not push yourself to drink too much or you may provoke vomiting.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients to avoid exercise during this stage. It is important to take it slow and keep in mind that you will already be losing a lot of weight through diet alone.

It is important, however, to walk constantly during the day. Do not stay in bed all day or you may risk forming blood clots. Get up and walk around your house or block every 20-30 minutes to keep the blood flowing and your metabolism active.

Longer-term, it is important to keep in mind that exercise is not the best way to lose weight, but rather changes in our diets. So focus on eating right and you will see the pounds come off.

**Vitamins and Supplements:** Vitamins and supplements will help you get the necessary nutrition during your recovery stage and over the long term too. You should begin taking them at this stage. It is recommended that you always take them with food or liquids. The required vitamins and supplements are the following:

- Multivitamins

- Take 2 chewable multivitamins per day, one with breakfast and one with dinner. Chewable vitamins are often more easily absorbed by the body. Make sure they are for adults and not for children.
- Recommended brand: Centrum Chewable Multivitamin/Multimineral Supplement.

- Vitamin B-Complex

- Take 1 chewable vitamin per day with breakfast.
- Recommended brand: Vitafusion B Complex Gummy Vitamins.
- If you choose a different brand just make sure it contains at least 100% of your daily B-12 requirements.

- Calcium Citrate

- There are 2 different types of Calcium: Calcium Citrate and Calcium Carbonate. Make sure to take Calcium Citrate because it is absorbed better by the body.
- Recommended brands: Rainbow Light Calcium Citrate Chocolate Chewable, Solaray Calcium Citrate Chewable.
- Whichever brand you choose, make sure to get a total daily dose equal to 1,000 mg per day. Take half during breakfast or lunch and the other half during dinner.

- Iron

- Take during breakfast. Make sure to not take at the same time as calcium.
- The required dosage is 18 mg to 25 mg.
- Recommended brands: NutriPure Melts in Mouth Chewable Iron, BariMelts Iron + Vitamin C.
- It is recommended to take your iron supplements with a dose of Vitamin C for better absorption. The recommended brands already include some Vitamin C.

- Gallbladder pills (optional but highly recommended)

- When your body loses weight at a drastic pace, your gallbladder may be at risk of developing stones. The purpose of taking these pills is to help prevent any formation of these stones.
- Take 1 serving per day for the first 6 months or as directed by your doctor. After that, you may discontinue it. Consult with your doctor before taking it.
- Recommended brand: Stone Breaker Chanca Piedra (pulverize and dilute in water).

- Protein Supplements

- We suggest buying protein powder rather than pre-made protein shakes. Making your own protein shakes with the powder will allow you to control the ingredients going into the shake for a better quality drink. It is recommended to prepare your protein drink with unsweetened plant-based milk such as soy, almond, or low fat coconut.
- It is common for patients to develop dairy intolerances after surgery. Whey protein is derived from dairy, so if you are having trouble consuming these types of protein supplements, we highly suggest switching to plant-based sources. You can also start directly with plant-based sources if desired.
- Recommended powder brands: Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard 100% Whey, Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard 100% Plant-based, Vega Clean Protein (plant-based), Isopure
- Recommended pre-made drink brands: Premier Protein, Protein2O
- If you prefer to buy another brand of protein powder just make sure it meets the following nutrition requirements per serving.
  - Calories: 110 to 130
  - Protein: 20 to 25 grams
  - Fat: No more than 7 grams
  - Carbs: No more than 5 grams

- Suggested supplements schedule:

- **Morning:** Multivitamin, B-Complex, Iron, Gallbladder
- **Lunch:** Calcium citrate (half)
- **Dinner:** Multivitamin, Calcium citrate (remaining half)

- Note: All these brands are available on Amazon.com for your convenience. If you buy any that are not chewable please crush them into powder and drink with liquids. Do not swallow any supplements.

## STAGE 3: Pureed Foods

**Duration:** 2 weeks

**Days:** 15 to 30 (after surgery)

**Calories:** 600 to 800 per day

**Suggested daily meal schedule:**

- 4 small meals of 2 ounces each
- 3 protein drinks of 6 ounces each

**Goal:**

- Slightly increase food consistency.
- Introduce 8 ounces of pureed foods per day.
- Continue to consume 60 grams of protein.
- Continue to stay hydrated and drink 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day.

**Description:** This stage slightly increases your daily calorie intake so that your stomach does not feel a drastic change in terms of food assimilation, digestion, and absorption. It will help prevent your liver and other organs from overworking themselves.

All food should be pureed or have a consistency similar to baby food. Some ingredients may taste or be tolerated differently than they did prior to surgery. Therefore, it's recommended that you introduce new foods slowly. This will help you identify foods that are causing gas, stomach upset, diarrhea or any other type of GI discomfort.

You should continue consuming 60 grams of protein per day and may now add different protein sources such as egg whites, pureed fish, and pureed chicken.

**Approved foods:**

- All liquids approved in the previous stages plus:

- Fruits
  - Unsweetened applesauce.
  - Mashed banana.
- Healthy Fats
  - Mashed avocado. Limit to 1 ounce per day.
  - Peanut or almond butter. Limit to 1 tbsp per day. Ingredients list on nutrition label should only say roasted peanut or almonds. A bit of salt is ok but it should not include any added oils or sweeteners. Recommended to puree with oats and unsweetened almond or soy milk.

- Protein
  - Pureed salmon, tilapia, cod, chicken, and turkey. Tip: Blend it cooked together with a bit of vegetable broth and your boiled vegetable of choice.
  - Scrambled egg whites.
  - Greek yogurt, non-fat and plain.
  - Low-fat or non-fat cottage cheese.
- Vegetables
  - Blended, boiled vegetables such as zucchini, carrots, spinach, and green beans.
- Starches
  - Mashed potato, butternut squash, and sweet potato (moist). You may add a bit of milk or broth to make sure it is moist. Avoid adding butter due to its high concentration of saturated fats.
- Grains
  - Blended oatmeal and cream of wheat (preferably prepared with unsweetened soy or almond milk). Note: Avoid buying prepackaged oatmeal packets since they tend to have added sugar.
- Other
  - Baby food, such as Gerber, with no added sugar (must check the ingredients list on nutrition label).

For a complete list of approved foods please visit our [When To Eat What](#) page on our website.

#### **Tips and Guidelines:**

- You must stop drinking all fluids 30 minutes before and after each meal. Drink minimally (or nothing if possible) during meals. Since your stomach has decreased considerably in size, this will help you to fill up with food and not just liquids.
- Eat slowly and chew thoroughly (25 times per bite) to prevent any vomiting. It might be tempting to chew very little since the food is already pureed, but we recommend taking this opportunity to practice chewing thoroughly.
- If you are having trouble finishing your food during each meal, it is perfectly fine to take a 30-minute or longer break and then continue eating. Try to finish your food for the day but never if it means pushing your stomach to eat more than you feel it can.

- Continue drinking 48-64 ounces of liquids per day. Protein drinks count as liquids, not meals. We recommend drinking 8 ounces of diluted 100% fruit juice or undiluted coconut water and 8 ounces of low sugar electrolyte drinks per day. You should drink the juice if you feel lightheaded at any point during the day. As your recovery progresses we will reduce juice consumption until we eliminate it completely. The remaining liquids should be mostly water.
- Avoid citric fruits or any foods that are acidic or spicy, as these may still cause some discomfort or irritation.
- If pureed foods cause any discomfort such as nausea or vomiting then it is perfectly normal to go back a stage or even to clear liquids for a day or two and then try again. Experiencing this trial and error process is completely normal during your recovery.
- Eggs and dairy are common new intolerances developed after surgery so try them every other day to test them first. If eating them causes discomfort or any intolerance, then stop eating it and wait until stage 4 to try them again. If after that you still cannot tolerate certain foods, then you can try them one last time in stage 5. If discomfort persists, you may have become intolerant to it and should no longer consume it.
- Do not weigh yourself more than once per week. Pick a day of the week (we recommend Wednesdays or Thursdays) and weigh yourself every week only on that day and in the morning before having liquids or food. Weighing yourself too often can create too much mental pressure.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients avoid exercise during this stage. It is important to take it slow and keep in mind that you will already be losing a lot of weight through diet alone.

It is important, however, to walk constantly during the day. Walk around your house or office every 20-30 minutes to keep the blood flowing and your metabolism active. Try aiming for 3,000 to 4,000 steps per day. You may download an app on your phone to help you track this.

Longer-term, it is important to keep in mind that exercise is not the best way to lose weight, but rather changes in our diets.

**Vitamins and Supplements:** Continue taking supplements as indicated in Stage 2. It is recommended that you always take them with food or liquids.

## STAGE 4: Soft Foods

**Duration:** 1 month

**Days:** 30 to 60 (after surgery)

**Calories:** 700-900

**Suggested daily meal schedule:**

- 4 small meals of 2-3 ounces each
- 2 protein drinks of 6 ounces each

**Goal:**

- Introduce new foods with more texture.
- Slowly begin to consume more protein from food instead of liquids.
- Continue to consume 60 grams of protein.
- Continue to stay hydrated and drink 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day.
- By the end of this stage, you should be able to eat 3 ounces of food per meal without any problems.

**Description:** You should only begin this stage if you can easily finish 2 ounces of soft foods per meal. This stage acts as a bridge between liquids and solid foods and is crucial in determining how long your healing process will last. Your sleeve and stomach are still sensitive, so go slow and remember to chew each bite thoroughly (at least 25 times).

Food should still be soft in consistency and easily broken with a fork. For chicken it is recommended to use darker meats such as thighs, and for them to be skinless and boneless. Darker meats tend to be moister because of their slightly higher fat content and can be much easier to eat than drier parts of the chicken, like the breast. Fish will be an important part of your diet during this stage for having a soft consistency and being a rich source of protein. You can also introduce several vegetables at this stage, such as carrots and zucchini. Make sure to boil your vegetables and avoid anything with too much insoluble fiber such as celery, broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower.

At this stage, we will introduce legumes, which will play a vital role in your longer-term diet due to their high iron, fiber, and protein content. It is recommended to add them slowly into your diet so that your body does not feel the effects of a very sudden change, such as an intolerance or bloating. To help avoid bloating, make sure to buy dried beans and soak them for 8-12 hours instead of buying them cooked and canned.

You can now also reintroduce coffee into your diet. If you choose to do so, try to consume it with moderation (no more than 8 ounces per day) and be sure to compensate it with plenty of liquids to avoid dehydration, given that coffee is a diuretic.

### **Approved foods:**

- All foods and liquids approved in the previous stages plus:

- Protein
  - Shredded chicken (dark meat). Note: Due to its higher fat content it is recommended to stick to chicken breast over the long term.
  - Well-cooked and moist fish such as salmon, cod, tilapia, or tuna
  - Scrambled egg whites
  - Tofu
- Legumes
  - Legumes such as black beans, chickpeas or lentils. If buying canned make sure they are low sodium or have no added salt.
- Healthy fats
  - Hummus, avocado
- Grain
  - Oatmeal (preferably prepared with unsweetened soy or almond milk)
- Vegetables
  - Boiled vegetables such as zucchini, carrots, green beans, and eggplant
- Starchy Vegetables
  - Boiled potatoes, butternut squash, and sweet potatoes (without skin)
- Fruit
  - Soft fruit: banana, watermelon, canned peaches and pears in their own juice (not syrup).

For a complete list of approved foods please visit our [When To Eat What](#) page on our website.

### **Tips and Guidelines:**

- Eat your protein first! If you are having trouble finishing your meals then prioritize the protein (protein shakes, chicken, fish, eggs, and tofu).
- You must stop drinking all fluids 30 minutes before and after each meal. Drink minimally (or nothing if possible) during meals. Since your stomach has decreased considerably in size, this will help you to fill up with food and not just liquids.
- Eat slowly and only small bites at a time to prevent any vomiting or discomfort (some patients experience the unpleasant feeling of food getting stuck at the entrance of their stomach when they take too big of a bite).



- Chew your food thoroughly (25 times per bite).
- If you are having trouble finishing your food during each meal, it is perfectly fine to take a small break for a couple of minutes and then continue eating. It can easily take you 30 minutes to finish your meal and that is perfectly normal. Try to finish your food for the day but never if it means pushing your stomach to eat more than you feel it can.
- Add new foods one at a time so that you can easily identify any that do not sit too well with your new pouch.
- Continue drinking 48-64 ounces of liquids per day. Protein drinks count as liquids, not meals. We recommend drinking 8 ounces of diluted 100% fruit juice or undiluted coconut water and 8 ounces of low sugar electrolyte drinks per day. You should drink the juice if you feel lightheaded at any point during the day. As your recovery progresses we will reduce juice consumption until we eliminate it completely. The remaining liquids should be mostly water.
- Avoid citric fruits or any foods that are acidic or spicy, as these may still cause some discomfort or irritation.
- If soft foods cause any discomfort then it is perfectly normal to go back a stage or even to clear liquids for a day or two and then try again. Experiencing this trial and error process is completely normal during your recovery.
- Avoid beef or any steaks, as these foods may cause the feeling of food getting stuck, given its tough texture. Beef will be introduced after stage 6.
- One part of the stomach that was removed during surgery was in charge of producing the Ghrelin hormone, also known as the “hunger hormone.” This will help you to feel less hungry but it is very important to eat constantly throughout the day to keep your body nourished. Set reminders on your phone if you are having trouble remembering to eat.
- Eggs and dairy are common new intolerances developed after surgery, so add them slowly back into your diet. If eating them causes discomfort or any intolerance, then stop eating them and wait until stage 5 to try them again. If you have already experienced symptoms of intolerances in previous stages and they persist during this stage, you should consider the possibility that you may have become intolerant to them and should no longer consume them.
- Use a food scale and measuring spoons. It is very important to use the exact measurements we provide on the meal plan. Our recipes give measurements in both volume/amount and in grams so you are able to weigh everything. We use grams instead of ounces because it can be a more exact measure.
- Do not weigh yourself more than once per week. Pick a day of the week (we recommend Wednesdays or Thursdays) and weigh yourself every week only on that day and in the morning before having liquids or food. Weighing yourself too often can create too much mental pressure.

- Everyone's bodies are slightly different, so your recovery could be slightly faster or slower than others. It will be important, however, to remember that the size of your stomach has shrunk considerably and that you will not be able to eat as much as before. This stage begins to slowly incorporate real food back into your diet, but it may take up to 6 months after surgery for you to be able to eat most foods again.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients avoid exercise during this stage. It is important to take it slow and keep in mind that you will already be losing a lot of weight through diet alone.

It is important, however, to walk constantly during the day. Walk around your house or office every 20-30 minutes to keep the blood flowing and your metabolism active. Try aiming for 4,000 to 5,000 steps per day. You may download an app on your phone to help you track this.

Longer-term, it is important to keep in mind that exercise is not the best way to lose weight, but rather changes in our diets.

#### **Vitamins and Supplements:**

Continue taking supplements as indicated in Stage 3. It is recommended that you always take them with food or liquids.

## STAGE 5: Solid Foods

**Duration:** 1 month

**Days:** 60 to 90 (after surgery)

**Calories:** 800-1,000

### Suggested daily meal schedule:

- 3 meals of 3-4 ounces each
- 2 small snacks (1 ounce each)
- 1-2 protein drinks of 6 ounces each

### Goal:

- Slightly increase the size of each meal.
- Introduce firmer food textures.
- Continue to consume 60 grams of protein.
- Continue to reduce dependency on protein drinks.
- Stay hydrated and drink 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day.
- Comfortably eat 3-4 ounces of food per meal by the end of this stage.

**Description:** Congrats! You've made it past the hardest stages. Everything from now on will start getting much easier. It is still important to keep in mind the tips from previous stages, such as chewing your food thoroughly and eating slowly, but you should now be able to start eating more per meal and introduce new foods into your diet.

Since you should already be consuming enough protein, the added ounces of food per day are recommended to come from other types of foods. These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. These will provide your body with a variety of micronutrients that will keep you in good health.

With each stage also comes a slight increase in daily caloric intake (due to the higher volume of food per day). It is important to consume sufficient calories at each stage to keep energy levels balanced and prevent your metabolism from slowing down too much, as this may work against your weight loss goals.

### Approved foods:

- All foods and liquids approved in the previous stages plus:

- Protein
  - Chicken breast (as moist as possible, may add low-calorie sauce)
  - Ground turkey and turkey ham
- Vegetables
  - New vegetables, such as cooked bell pepper, tomatoes, and cucumber (without skin first).

- Starchy Vegetables
  - New starchy vegetable: peas
- Fruit
  - New fruits: melon, watermelon, peach, grapes (seedless). Avoid fruits with peels.
  - Berries, raisins, dates
- Grains
  - Whole grain such as brown rice and quinoa.

For a complete list of approved foods please visit our When To Eat What page on our website.

### **Tips and Guidelines:**

- Eat your protein first! If you are having trouble finishing your meal then prioritize the protein.
- You must stop drinking all fluids 30 minutes before and after each meal. Drink minimally (or nothing if possible) during meals. Since your stomach has decreased considerably in size, this will help you to fill up with food and not just liquids.
- Eat slowly and only small bites at a time to prevent any vomiting or discomfort (some patients experience the unpleasant feeling of food getting stuck at the entrance of their stomach when they take too big of a bite).
- Chew your food thoroughly (25 times per bite).
- If you are having trouble finishing your food during each meal, it is perfectly fine to take a small break of a couple of minutes and then continue eating. Try to finish your food for the day but never if it means pushing your stomach to eat more than you feel it can.
- Add new foods one at a time so that you can easily identify any that do not sit too well with your new pouch.
- Continue drinking 48-64 ounces of liquids per day. Protein drinks count as liquids, not meals. We recommend drinking 4 ounces of diluted 100% fruit juice or undiluted coconut water and 8 ounces of low sugar electrolyte drinks per day. You should drink the juice if you feel lightheaded at any point during the day. As your recovery progresses we will reduce juice consumption until we eliminate it completely. The remaining liquids should be mostly water.
- You can now begin trying slightly citric fruits such as lime and pineapple. Incorporate them into your diet in small amounts and begin testing them every other day to see if they cause any irritation. Discontinue if they still provoke discomfort and wait until the next stage to try them again.
- If solid foods cause any discomfort then it is perfectly normal to go back a stage or even to clear liquids for a day or two and then try again. Experiencing this trial and error process is completely normal during your recovery.

- Avoid beef or any steaks, as these foods may cause the feeling of food getting stuck, given its tough texture. Beef will be introduced after stage 6.
- One part of the stomach that was removed during surgery was in charge of producing the Ghrelin hormone, also known as the “hunger hormone.” This will help you to feel less hungry but it is very important to eat constantly throughout the day to keep your body nourished. Set reminders on your phone if you are having trouble remembering to eat.
- Eggs and dairy are common new intolerances developed after surgery, so add them slowly back into your diet. If eating them causes discomfort or any intolerance, then stop eating them and wait until stage 6 to try them again. If you have already experienced symptoms of intolerance in previous stages and they persist during this stage, you should consider the possibility that you may have become intolerant to them and should no longer consume them.
- Use a food scale and measuring spoons. It is very important to use the exact measurements we provide on the meal plan. Our recipes give measurements in both volume/amount and in grams so you are able to weigh everything. We use grams instead of ounces because it can be a more exact measure.
- Do not weigh yourself more than once per week. Pick a day of the week (we recommend Wednesdays or Thursdays) and weigh yourself every week only on that day and in the morning before having liquids or food. Weighing yourself too often can create too much mental pressure.
- Everyone’s bodies are slightly different so your recovery could be slightly faster or slower than others. It will be important, however, to remember that the size of your stomach has shrunk considerably and that you will not be able to eat as much as before. This stage continues to slowly incorporate real food back into your diet, but it may take up to 6 months after surgery for you to be able to eat most foods again.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients avoid exercise during this stage. It is important to take it slow and keep in mind that you will already be losing a lot of weight through diet alone.

It is not recommended to exercise until you almost reach your goal. Exercising as a way to lose weight is counterproductive at this point in your recovery. Since your stomach has shrunk in size considerably and you have still not fully recovered, it will be difficult for you to recover burned calories during exercise. This can lead to increased hunger, decreased energy levels, and a slowdown in your metabolism, all of which will work against your weight loss goals.

Instead of exercising, it is recommended to go for light walks or simply walking constantly during the day. Try aiming for 4,000 to 5,000 steps per day. You may download an app on your phone to help you track this.

Longer-term, it is important to keep in mind that exercise is not the best way to lose weight, but rather making changes in our diets.

**Vitamins and Supplements:** Continue taking supplements as indicated in Stage 4. It is recommended that you always take them with food or liquids.

## STAGE 6: Transition Foods

**Duration:** 1 to 3 months

**Days:** 90 to 180 (after surgery)

**Calories:** 900-1,100

### Suggested daily meal schedule:

- 3 meals of 4-5 ounces each
- 2-3 snacks of 1-2 ounces each
- 1 protein drink of 6 ounces as a snack or meal

### Goal:

- To slightly increase the size of each meal.
- Continue to introduce new foods.
- Continue to consume 60 grams of protein.
- Stay hydrated and drink 48 to 64 ounces of liquids per day (this will also be the goal for the long term)
- Comfortably eat 4-5 ounces of food per meal by the end of this stage.

**Description:** This stage is the last stage of your post-op diet. It will include more diversity in the foods you eat and will act as an important transition from the initial stage of solid foods to your lifelong diet. Once completed, you will be fully recovered from your surgery and able to enjoy all the new foods you have discovered through the post-op diet plus more to come!

You will now be able to introduce a variety of new veggies. It is recommended to try them cooked or boiled first before trying anything raw. Certain fruits will also be added during this stage. It is important to cut them into very small pieces and to chew thoroughly (at least 25 times). Remember to eat your protein first during every meal.

Please note that this stage lasts about 3 months and adds a lot of new ingredients, but not all of them at the same time. To get an idea of recommended foods at each stage, visit our “When To Eat What” page on our website. It is important to keep in mind that every patient’s recovery process can vary, so you may only have to do this stage for a couple of weeks or up to 3 months, even more. Either way, it is crucial to be patient with your body and learn to listen to it and give it what it needs.

### Approved foods:

- All foods and liquids approved in the previous stages plus:
- New vegetables: cabbage (cooked), kale (try cooked first), and more.
- Raw fruits: apple (first eat without skin), pear, mango, clementine, oranges, cantaloupe melon, apricots, plums, and more. Chop to ensure you continue taking small bites.
- Raw nuts: almonds and cashews (highest in protein), Brazil nuts (help lower bad cholesterol), walnuts, pecans, and more. Avoid nuts that are sweetened or salted.



- Seeds: chia, flax, pumpkin (aka pepitas), and more. Chew thoroughly.
- 100% Whole-wheat bread (in moderation).

Please note that this stage adds a lot of new foods but not all of them at the same time. For a complete list of approved foods please visit our When To Eat What page on our website or click on the following link: <https://www.gastricsleeve.com/when-to-eat-what>

### **Tips and Guidelines:**

- Eat your protein first! If you are having trouble finishing your meal then prioritize the protein (protein drinks, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, and tofu).
- You must stop drinking all fluids 30 minutes before and after each meal. Drink minimally (or nothing if possible) during meals. Since your stomach has decreased considerably in size, this will help you to fill up with food and not just liquids.
- Eat slowly and only small bites at a time to prevent any vomiting or discomfort (some patients experience the unpleasant feeling of food getting stuck at the entrance of their stomach when they take too big of a bite).
- Chew your food thoroughly (25 times per bite).
- If you are having trouble finishing your food during each meal, it is perfectly fine to take a small break for a couple of minutes and then continue eating. Try to finish your food for the day but never if it means pushing your stomach to eat more than you feel it can.
- Continue drinking 48-64 ounces of liquids per day. Protein drinks count as liquids, not meals. We recommend drinking 4 ounces of diluted 100% fruit juice or undiluted coconut water and 8 ounces of low sugar electrolyte drinks per day. You should drink the juice if you feel lightheaded at any point during the day. As your recovery progresses we will reduce juice consumption until we eliminate it completely. All remaining liquids should consist of mostly water.
- Add new foods one at a time so that you can easily identify any that do not go too well with your new pouch. If a new food does not suit you well, eliminate it from your diet for a week or two and then try it again to see if you can tolerate it. If not, then maybe this food will not go well with your diet anymore.
- Avoid beef or any steaks, as these foods may cause the feeling of food getting stuck, given its tough texture. Ground beef is okay as long as it is at least 90% lean.
- If solid foods cause any discomfort then it is perfectly normal to go back a stage for a day or two and then try again. Experiencing this trial and error process is completely normal during your recovery.
- One part of the stomach that was removed during surgery was in charge of producing the Ghrelin hormone, also known as the "hunger hormone." This will help you to feel less hungry but it is very important to eat constantly throughout the day to keep your body nourished. Set reminders on your phone if you are having trouble remembering to eat.

- Eggs, dairy, rice, and pasta are common new intolerances developed after surgery, so add them slowly back into your diet. If eating them causes discomfort or any intolerance, then stop eating them and wait until after this stage to try them again. If you have already experience symptoms of intolerance in previous stages and they persist during this stage, you should consider the possibility that you may have become intolerant to them and should no longer consume them.
- Use a food scale and measuring spoons. It is very important to use the exact measurements we provide on the meal plan. Our recipes give measurements in both volume/amount and in grams so you are able to weigh everything. We use grams instead of ounces because it can be a more exact measure.
- Do not weigh yourself more than once per week. Pick a day of the week (we recommend Wednesdays or Thursdays) and weigh yourself every week only on that day and in the morning before having liquids or food. Weighing yourself too often can create too much mental pressure.
- Everyone's bodies are slightly different so your recovery could be slightly faster or slower than others. It will be important, however, to remember that the size of your stomach has shrunk considerably and that you will not be able to eat as much as before. This stage continues to slowly incorporate real food back into your diet, but it may take up to 6 months after surgery for you to be able to eat most foods again.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients avoid exercise during this stage. It is important to take it slow and keep in mind that you will already be losing a lot of weight through diet alone.

It is not recommended to exercise until you almost reach your goal. Exercising as a way to lose weight is counterproductive at this point in your recovery. Since your stomach has shrunk in size considerably and you have still not fully recovered, it will be difficult for you to recover burned calories during exercise. This can lead to increased hunger, decreased energy levels, and a slowdown in your metabolism, all of which will work against your weight loss goals.

Instead of exercising, it is recommended to go for light walks or simply walking constantly during the day. Try aiming for 4,000 to 5,000 steps per day. You may download an app on your phone to help you track this.

Longer-term, it is important to keep in mind that exercise is not the best way to lose weight, but rather changes in our diets.

**Vitamins and Supplements:** Continue taking supplements as indicated in Stage 5. It is recommended that you always take them with food or liquids. During this stage it is also recommended to add a fiber supplement. Once you finish this stage and are able to eat more, you should try to obtain all dietary fiber from food alone.

- Take one serving per day together with a snack. Serving size should contain around 4-5 grams of fiber. Recommended brand: FiberAdvance Gummies.



## Post-Recovery

**Duration:** Life-long

**Days:** 180+

**Calories:** 1,000-1,200

**Suggested daily meal schedule:**

- 3 meals of 5-6 ounces each
- 3 snacks of 1-2 ounces each

**Goal:**

- Eat a healthy diet and continue progressing towards your weight goals
- Prevent weight regain once you reach your goal
- Continue to consume 60 grams of protein per day, ideally all of it from food rather than liquids (protein shakes). Contact our nutritionists if you wish to get your exact daily protein requirements.

**Description:** By the time you reach this stage you will have fully and successfully recovered from your gastric sleeve surgery. You should be able to tolerate a wide variety of foods by this point.

You can also start to slowly introduce slightly spicy food if desired. Your tolerance may have changed after surgery so it is recommended to take it slow.

**Approved foods:**

- All foods and liquids approved in the previous stages plus
- New vegetables: asparagus, broccoli, celery, cauliflower, and more. Chop to ensure you continue taking small bites.
- New fruits: raw mango and pineapple.
- Corn kernels.
- Shredded beef and lamb. Eat in very small bites and chew thoroughly as it may cause discomfort when swallowing if not done so properly. Steak should be avoided.
- Raw fish (sushi grade only). Can be a common new intolerance developed after surgery so try it in small amounts first.
- Seafood: squid, octopus, scallops, and more. Chewed thoroughly.
- Alcohol: beer, wine, and liquor. In extreme moderation. Your tolerance for alcohol is very likely to have dropped significantly so be careful if you choose to drink it. Alcohol also has a lot of empty calories so it will work against your weight loss goals.

For a complete list of approved foods please visit our When To Eat What page on our website.

### **Daily Macronutrient Recommendations:**

- Protein 60 grams per day
- Carbohydrates 100-130 grams per day
- Fat 45-60 grams per day

### **Tips and Guidelines:**

- Eat your protein first! If you are having trouble finishing your meal then prioritize the protein.
- You must stop drinking all fluids 30 minutes before and after each meal. Drink minimally (or nothing if possible) during meals. Since your stomach has decreased considerably in size, this will help you to fill up with food and not just liquids.
- Eat slowly and only small bites at a time.
- Chew your food thoroughly (25 times per bite).
- Continue drinking 48-64 ounces of liquids per day consisting of mostly water. You should avoid juice.
- Steak should be avoided as much as possible. It is difficult to chew thoroughly and for your digestive system to process. Plus, it can get stuck in your tract in some cases.
- Aim for at least 20 grams of fiber per day. It is preferable to obtain it from food, but in case you are struggling to reach these levels, or if you are experience irregular bowel movements, you may add a fiber chewable supplement.
- Do not eat protein in excess. Doing so will only deprive your body from obtaining vital nutrients from other foods that you need to function properly. Being deprived of other nutrients due to a high protein intake can lead to chronic fatigue, constipation, bad breath, and mood swings. Your requirements may vary if you exercise intensively (which is something we do not recommend doing).
- Do not be afraid of carbs. Carbs are your body's preferred source of energy and are therefore needed in your diet. What you should avoid is processed carbs such as cookies, pastries, and chips. Opt instead for whole foods such as legumes, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Fiber is essential for your health and is a carbohydrate that is only found in plant-based food.

### **Foods you should avoid:**

- Dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, creams, and butter. While some dairy products like Greek yogurt and cottage cheese are helpful during your recovery, they should be avoided as much as possible or be kept at minimum levels for the longer term. Dairy products are usually very processed and tend to contain high amounts of calories and/or saturated fat.
- Avoid all added sugars in foods and drinks. Sugar obtained from natural sources like fruit, however, is good and should be part of a healthy diet.
- Keep consumption of red meats and pork to a minimum, as they tend to be high in saturated fat. It is best to avoid overall.
- No bacon.
- Avoid deep-fried foods at all costs.
- Absolutely no soft drinks or soda (even if they are sugar free).
- Avoid all processed foods. This includes chips, cookies, pastries, protein bars, granola bars, energy bars/drinks, etc.
- Fruit juices should be avoided as much as possible because they can add a lot of extra calories to your diet. Even though these are essential during your post-op diet, for the long term it is much better to eat whole fruits due to their fiber content.

**Exercise:** We recommend all patients avoid exercising until they are at least 6 months after their surgery. It is best to start exercise routines only when you are close to your long-term weight goal. Exercising as a way to lose weight can be counterproductive. Since your stomach has shrunk in size considerably, it may be difficult for you to recover burned calories during exercise. This can lead to increased hunger, decreased energy levels, and a slowdown in your metabolism, all of which will work against your weight loss goals.

Once you are closer to your long-term weight goal, you may start doing some light exercising such as light jogs. Strength training can also be a good form of exercise. However, exercise is still optional. Getting around 5,000 steps per day will keep you active enough and with the proper diet, you should be able to reach your goal and keep the weight off. The changes you make to your diet are what will make the difference in the long run.

To read more about exercise for gastric sleeve patients please click on the following link: <https://www.gastricsleeve.com/exercise/>

### **Vitamins and Supplements:**

You may now discontinue gall bladder pills. If you still have a lot of weight to lose (which is normal) then you may continue with them for another 3 months to continue helping to prevent the formation of stones.



We highly recommend that you get blood work done at this point and then at least once per year going forward to make sure everything is okay. Regular blood work is not only recommended for gastric sleeve patients but for everyone else as well.

Because your stomach has shrunk in size considerably, you may not be able to get all the nutrients you need from your food alone. Therefore, it is recommended to take 1 serving per day of the following even after your full recovery:

- Multivitamin
- Iron
- Calcium citrate (taken at a different time than iron)
- Vitamin B-complex
- Fiber (if struggling to get at least 20 grams per day).

It is recommended to consume these in chewable forms so they are easier to digest. It is also recommended that you always take them with food or liquids.

We hope these guidelines serve you well during your recovery! For ideas on recipes and meal plans please visit our website at [www.GastricSleeveRecipes.com](http://www.GastricSleeveRecipes.com).

Best wishes,

The GastricSleeveRecipes.com Team



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