

EATING AFTER YOUR ESOPHAGEAL SURGERY

After your esophageal surgery, you can expect some difficulty swallowing. If food sticks when you eat it, it is called “dysphagia”. This is due to swelling around your surgery site and will most likely resolve within a few weeks.

To help you through this temporary phase, we start you out on a **pureed** diet. Your first meal in the hospital was clear liquids. You should have been given a **pureed** diet by the time you left the hospital. We ask patients to remain on a **pureed** diet for the first two weeks to avoid anything getting “stuck” near your recent surgery. Below are some suggestions for your diet in the first few weeks after your surgery. Don’t be alarmed if your ability to swallow doesn’t progress according to this plan. Everyone is different and some take longer or shorter. Use common sense. If you are having trouble swallowing a particular food, then avoid it. If food is sticking when you advance your diet – go back to the previous diet for a day or two.

In general, some simple rules to follow are:

- Maintain an upright position (as near 90 degrees as possible) whenever eating or drinking.
- Take small bites – only ½ to 1 teaspoon at a time.
- Eat slowly. It may also help to eat only one food at a time.
- Avoid talking while eating.
- Do not mix solid foods and liquids in the same mouthful and do not “wash foods down” with liquids, unless you have been instructed to do so by your surgeon.
- Eat in a relaxed atmosphere, with no distractions.
- Following each meal, sit in an upright position (op degree angle) for 30 to 45 minutes.
- Avoid carbonated (bubbly) drinks.
- If food does stick – don’t panic. Try to relax and let the food pass on its own. Sipping strong hot black tea can also help.

Level 1 – Pureed Foods: 1st 2 weeks after surgery

Foods in this group are pureed or blenderized to a smooth, mashed potato-like consistency. If necessary, the pureed foods can keep their shape with the addition of a thickening agent. Meat should be pureed to a smooth pasty consistency. Hot broth or hot gravy may be added to the pureed meat, approximately 1 oz. of liquid per 3 oz. Serving of meat.

CAUTION: If any foods do not puree into a smooth consistency, it may make eating or swallowing more difficult. For example, zucchini seeds sometimes do not blend well.

Hot foods	Cold foods
	Pureed cottage cheese
Pureed scrambled eggs & cheese	Thickened juices & nectars
Baby cereals	Thickened milk or eggnog
Thinned cooked cereals (no lumps)	Ensure
Pureed French toast or pancakes	Ice cream
Mashed potatoes	Thick milkshakes
Pureed parsley, au gratin, scalloped potatoes, candied sweet potatoes	Fruit or Italian ice, sherbet
Pureed buttered or Alfredo noodles	Plain yogurt
Pureed vegetables (no corn or peas)	Instant breakfast
Pureed soups & creamed soups	Smooth pudding, mousse, custard
Pureed scalloped apples	Whipped gelatin
Gravies	Sugar, syrup, honey, jelly
Sauces, cheese, tomato, barbecue, white, creamed	Cream
Any baby food	Creamer
Alcohol in moderation (not beer or champagne)	Margarine

Coffee or tea	Mayonnaise
	Ketchup, mustard
	Apple sauce

SAMPLE MENU: PUREED DIET

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Orange juice ½ cup Cream of wheat ½ cup	Pineapple juice ½ cup	Pureed turkey, barley soup ¾ cup Pureed Hawaiian chicken 3 ounces
Scrambled eggs, mashed or blended with cheese ½ cup Tea or coffee 1 cup Whole milk 1 cup Non-dairy creamer 2 Tbsp	Mashed potatoes ½ cup Pureed cooled broccoli ½ cup Apple sauce ½ cup Coffee or tea	Mashed potatoes ½ cup Pureed spinach ½ cup Frozen yogurt ½ cup Coffee or tea

Level 2

After your first 2 weeks, you can advance to a soft diet. Keep on this diet until everything goes down easily.

Hot foods	Cold foods
White fish	Cottage cheese
Stuffed fish	Junior baby fruit
	Semi-thickened juices
Baby food meats	Nectars
Minced soft cooked, scrambled, poached eggs	
Souffle & omlets	Canned fruit, pineapple sauce, milk
Cooked cereals	Milkshake
Potatoes	Custard
Buttered or Alfredo noodles	Puddings, including tapioca
Cooked cooled vegetable	Yogurt
Creamed soups	Fruit ice, Italian ice
Sherbet	
Vegetable soup or alphabet soup	Whipped gelatin
	Junior baby desserts
Gravies	
Sugar, syrup, honey, jelly	
Sauces: Cheese, creamed, barbecue, tomato, white	Cream
Coffee or tea	Margarine

SAMPLE MENU: Level 2

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Orange juice ½ cup Oatmeal ½ cup Scrambled eggs w/cheese ½ cup Decaffeinated tea 1 cup Whole milk 1 cup Non-dairy creamer 2 Tbsp	Pineapple juice ½ cup Minced beef 3 oz. Gravy 2 Tbsp Mashed potatoes Minced fresh broccoli ½ cup Applesauce ½ cup Coffee 1 cup	Turkey, barley soup ¾ cup Minced Hawaiian chicken 3 oz. Mashed potatoes ½ cup Cooked spinach ½ cup Frozen yogurt ½ cup Non-dairy creamer 2 Tbsp

Level 3

After all the foods in Level 2 (Soft Diet) are passing through well, you should advance to the next level. It is still important to cut these foods into small pieces and eat slowly.

Hot foods	Cold foods
Poultry	Cottage cheese
Chopped Swedish meatballs	Yogurt
Meat salads (ground or flaked meat)	Milk
Flaked fish (tuna)	Milkshakes
Poached or scrambled eggs	Soft, cold, dry cereal
Souffles and omelets	
Cooked cereals	Fruit juices or nectars
Chopped French toast or pancakes	Chopped canned fruit
Noodles or pasta (no rice)	Canned fruit cocktail
Cooked vegetables (no frozen peas, corn or mixed vegetables)	Pudding, mousse, custard Green salad
Canned small sweet peas	Ice cream
Creamed soup or vegetable soup	Fruit ice, Italian ice
Pureed vegetable soup or alphabet soup	Non-dairy creamer
Ground scalloped apples	Margarine
Gravies	Mayonnaise
Sauces: cheese, creamed, barbecue, tomato, white	
Decaffeinated tea or coffee	Ketchup Mustard

Sample Menu: Level 3

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Orange juice ½ cup	Pineapple juice ½ cup	Pureed turkey, barley soup ¾ cup
Oatmeal ½ cup	Ground beef 3 oz	Barbecue Chicken 3 oz
Scrambled eggs w/cheese ½ cup	Gravy 2 Tbsp	Mashed potatoes ½ cup
Decaffeinated tea 1 cup	Mashed potatoes ½ cup	Ground fresh broccoli ½ cup
Whole milk 1 cup	Cooked spinach ½ cup	Frozen yogurt ½ cup
Non-dairy creamer 2 Tbsp	Applesauce ½ cup	Decaffeinated tea 1 cup
Ketchup 1 Tbsp	Decaffeinated coffee	Non-dairy creamer 1 2 Tbsp
Margarine 1 tsp	Whole milk	Margarine 1 tsp
Salt ¼ tsp	Non-dairy creamer 2 Tbsp	Salt ¼ tsp
Sugar 2 tsp	Margarine 1 tsp	Sugar 1 tsp
	Salt ¼ tsp	

Level 4: Regular Foods

Foods in this group are soft, moist, regularly textured foods. This level includes red meat, and breads which tend to be the hardest things to swallow. Eat very slowly, chew well, and continue to avoid carbonated drinks.

Hot Foods	Cold Foods
Baked fish or skinned	Soft cheeses – Cottage cheese
	Cream cheese
Souffles and omelets	Yogurt
Eggs	Milk

Stuffed shells	Milkshakes
Spaghetti with meat sauce	Cold dry cereals (no nuts, dried fruit, coconut)
Cooked cereal	Crackers
French toast or pancakes	Fruit juices or nectars
Buttered toast	Canned fruit
Noodles or pasta (no rice	
Potatoes (all types)	Ripe bananas
Soft, cooked vegetables (no corn, lima or baked beans)	Peeled, ripe, fresh fruit
Creamed soups or vegetable soup	Cakes (no nuts, dried fruit, coconut)
Canned chicken noodle soup	Plain doughnuts
Gravies	Ice cream
Bacon dressing	Pudding, mousse, custard
Sauces: cheese, creamed, barbecue, tomato, white	Fruit ice, Italian ice, sherbet
Decaffeinated tea or coffee	Whipped gelatin
Pork chops	Regular gelatin
	Canned fruited gelatin molds
	Sugary, syrup, honey, jam, jelly
	Non-dairy creamer
	Oil
	Mayonnaise
	Ketchup
	Mustard