

## Patient information factsheet

# Eating well before and after your cardiac operation

Eating a healthy well-balanced diet is an important part of preparing your body for an operation and for recovering afterwards. This factsheet contains some helpful tips on how to eat well before and after your operation. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

### Benefits of eating well before and after your operation

People who eat a healthy well-balanced diet before and after their operation may have:

- improved healing
- a decreased risk of infection
- a shorter hospital stay

### How to eat well

#### Before your operation

- Aim to maintain your weight (unless your healthcare team has advised you otherwise). Tell your healthcare team if you have recently lost weight without trying.
- Eat three meals a day, with additional snacks (if desired).
- Try to have a protein-rich food at each meal. For example, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, beans, or dairy.
- If your appetite is poor, try to eat little and often.

Contact a member of your healthcare team for advice if you are struggling to eat enough.

#### After your operation

Nutrition is key for healing and recovery. However, it is normal for people to have a reduced appetite after having an operation. Some people may also experience the following side effects:

- nausea (feel sick)
- a slightly sore throat
- taste changes

Let a member of your healthcare team know if you are struggling to eat enough because of these side effects.

If you have a reduced appetite after your operation, you may find the following tips helpful:

- Eat things that are high in calories (for example, request full-fat milk and snacks from the drinks trolley while in hospital).
- Try to eat little and often.

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- Prioritise eating carbohydrates and protein over vegetables.
- Try eating cold, plain, dry foods (if you are feeling nauseous).
- Have nutritional supplement drinks like Fortisip drinks. These drinks come in a variety of flavours and contain concentrated nutrients to help you recover from your operation until you can eat more.

Some people may need to be fed through a nasogastric (NG) tube (a thin, flexible tube inserted through your nose and into your stomach) for a short while after their operation. If this is the case for you, we will give you a nutrition formula via the NG tube until you can eat and drink enough by mouth.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

## If you are an inpatient

Please speak to your ward nurse or a member of your healthcare team.

## If you are an outpatient

Cardiac surgical case managers

Telephone: **023 8120 8686** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

Email: [ncm@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:ncm@uhs.nhs.uk)

## Useful links

For more information on preparing for your operation, please read our 'Preparing for surgery' leaflet: [www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Surgery/Preparing-for-surgery-3167-PIL.pdf](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Surgery/Preparing-for-surgery-3167-PIL.pdf)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide)

[www.vegansociety.com/resources/downloads/vegan-eatwell-guide](http://www.vegansociety.com/resources/downloads/vegan-eatwell-guide)

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