

## Patient information factsheet

# Following a soft and bite-sized diet after an oesophagectomy or a gastrectomy (step 5 diet)

We have given you this factsheet because your surgical team have recommended that you follow a soft and bite-sized diet after having one of the following surgeries:

- An oesophagectomy - A surgical procedure to remove all or part of your oesophagus (food pipe) containing the cancer. A new food pipe is then created by pulling your stomach up into your chest and reattaching it to the healthy part of your oesophagus.
- A gastrectomy - A surgical procedure to remove all or part of your stomach containing the cancer. This may be referred to as a total (all) or sub-total (partial) gastrectomy.

This factsheet explains what a soft and bite-sized diet is and how it can help you to recover from your surgery. 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.

For more information, please read this factsheet alongside our 'Following a purée diet after an oesophagectomy or gastrectomy (step 4 diet)' factsheet.

### Eating after your surgery (at home)

It is important that you eat a nourishing diet to help the healing process and to minimise weight loss.

As you continue to recover from your surgery, you may find the following tips helpful:

- Eat five to six small meals per day.
- Have smaller portions and stop eating when you feel full.
- Use a smaller plate so that you are not tempted to eat a large meal. If after an hour you still feel hungry, have a snack (see the 'dessert and snack ideas' section later on).
- Fortify meals where possible (add small quantities of high energy and high protein foods (such as cream, butter and cheese) to a food or meal to increase the nutritional content (calories), without increasing the portion size).
- Chew your food well and don't rush your meals. It is normal for a meal to take you around 20 to 30 minutes to eat.
- Add sauces and gravy to soften foods.
- Sit upright when you eat, and for about 30 minutes after meals.
- Aim to keep well hydrated by having eight to ten cups of fluid per day. This can include nourishing drinks, supplements, milk, tea and coffee. Have most of these drinks between meals and as snacks, and only sip small amounts while having meals. This prevents food from being 'flushed through' your system too quickly.

# Patient information factsheet

- Leave 30 minutes either side of your meals to have a full drink.
- Try not to eat too late into the evening as this may increase acid reflux symptoms. If you would like more information about acid reflux, please contact us.

## Step 5 diet

A step 5 diet involves following a modified soft and bite-sized diet of moist foods with only soft lumps which can easily be chewed. Some foods are naturally soft, while others may need to be softened by mashing with a fork, pushing through a sieve or using extra gravy, a sauce or custard.

You can enhance flavours while on this diet by adding mustard, curry powder, barbeque sauce, soy sauce, lemon juice, yeast or beef extract (such as Bovril or Marmite) to your foods.

The following foods aren't suitable and should **not** be included in your soft and bite-sized diet:

- Stringy foods (such as green beans, celery, rhubarb and pineapple)
- Crunchy foods (such as muesli, crisps, toast, nuts and crusty bread)
- Foods with skins or husks (such as sausages, peas and sweetcorn)
- Chewy foods (such as tough meat and toffees)
- Seeds and pips (such as summer fruits and citrus fruits)
- Doughy foods (such as bread, pizza and buns)

Here are some suggestions for meals and snacks in a soft and bite-sized diet:

### Breakfast ideas

- Porridge, Ready Brek or Oat So Simple
- Stewed fruit or banana with yoghurt
- Smooth yoghurt or fromage frais
- Scrambled eggs
- Plain omelette
- Soft boiled or poached eggs

These could also be nutritious snacks.

### Main meal ideas

#### Protein (meat, poultry, fish and vegetarian alternatives)

Protein plays a role in maintaining muscle mass and wound healing. Protein-based foods should form the main part of your meals after your surgery.

- Minced meat in stews and casseroles
- Slow-cooked meats (such as lamb or chicken thighs, removing tough gristle) served with a gravy or a sauce
- Boneless fish (cooked by steaming, baking, poaching or microwaving) and served with a sauce
- Tinned tuna or salmon with mayonnaise
- Lentils, such as dhal (well-cooked and mashed with a fork) and served with a flavoured sauce
- High protein vegetarian foods (such as silken tofu, beans, and pulses)
- Cheese added to sauces (avoid grating cheese onto hot food as it may become stringy and difficult to swallow when melted)
- Soft, cream or cottage cheese

# Patient information factsheet

- Nut butters (such as peanut, cashew and almond butter)
- Dairy foods (such as milk, yoghurt and cheese) and alternatives (such as soya)
- Eggs (scrambled or poached, or as an omelette)

## **Carbohydrates (pasta and potatoes)**

Carbohydrates provide the main preferred energy source for the body.

- Mashed potato, sweet potato or yam (with added milk and butter or margarine) served with a gravy or a sauce
- Jacket potato without skin
- Well-cooked pasta
- Boiled soft noodles or rice
- Plantain or cassava

## **Fruit and vegetables**

Fruit and vegetables provide essential fibre, vitamins and minerals. It's important to make these foods a regular part of your diet, but they should initially be eaten in small quantities.

- Fresh, frozen, or tinned vegetables cooked until soft (avoid green beans, salad leaves and mangetout)
- Vegetables with added margarine or butter, or a sauce such as cheese, white or smooth tomato sauce
- Root vegetables cooked until soft (such as carrots, parsnips, swede or butternut squash)
- Well-cooked broccoli or cauliflower florets
- Mashed avocado
- Fresh, frozen or tinned fruits or stewed fruit (such as apples) with added cream, Greek yoghurt or custard
- Ripe bananas, mangoes or pears
- Peeled lychees, peaches, nectarines or plums

## **Dessert and snack ideas**

You should leave a gap between eating your main meal and your dessert or you should have your dessert as a snack at another time.

- Packet desserts made with milk (with additional cream or evaporated milk for extra energy)
- Yoghurt, fromage frais and mousse (avoid low calorie and diet options)
- Blancmange, instant whips or fruit fools
- Milky puddings (such as semolina, sago, rice or tapioca) and custard
- Soft sponge puddings with added cream or custard
- Trifles (without hard fruit pieces)
- Tiramisu
- Crème caramel
- Ice cream

## **Vitamins and minerals**

Eating a variety of foods will help to give your body all the nutrients it needs. However, because of your surgery, you will need to take extra vitamins and minerals, including vitamin B12, iron, calcium and vitamin D. Your soluble A-Z multivitamin can now be changed to **tablet form**.

# Patient information factsheet

If you had a gastrectomy, you will need to have a B12 injection every three months after your surgery for the rest of your life. Your surgeon, specialist dietitian or specialist nurse will advise you on this.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your specialist dietitian or specialist nurse.

Healthcare professional: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Department of dietetics/speech and language therapy  
Telephone: **023 8120 6072** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

## Useful links

UHS -

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/gastroenterology/gastrointestinal-surgery/upper-gi-surgery](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/gastroenterology/gastrointestinal-surgery/upper-gi-surgery)

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Surgery/Enhanced-recovery-after-oesophagogastric-surgery-EROS-1404-PIL.pdf](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Surgery/Enhanced-recovery-after-oesophagogastric-surgery-EROS-1404-PIL.pdf)

Guts UK - [www.gutscharity.org.uk](http://www.gutscharity.org.uk)

Heartburn Cancer UK - [www.heartburncanceruk.org](http://www.heartburncanceruk.org)

OPA Cancer Charity - [www.opa.org.uk](http://www.opa.org.uk)

PLANETS Cancer Charity - [www.planetscharity.org](http://www.planetscharity.org)

## Additional support for people affected by cancer

Macmillan Cancer Support - [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Maggie's - [www.maggies.org](http://www.maggies.org)

Jane Scarth House - [www.janescarthhouse.co.uk](http://www.janescarthhouse.co.uk)

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **[www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)**

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