

LIFE AFTER BARIATRIC SURGERY

Bariatric surgery is an effective way to lose weight. But it's only the beginning. You will still need to eat healthy foods, control portion sizes, and exercise.

Food

A healthy diet is key. Eating mostly protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is still the best way to lose weight and keep it off. You should be eating at least 60 g of protein each day. The best sources of protein include meat, dairy, fish, eggs and legumes. To reach your daily protein intake, you might also consider protein extracts made from soy, brown rice and whey, and protein shakes or bars.

It is important to limit the amount of carbohydrates you eat, such as starchy foods (e.g., breads, pastas, crackers, refined cereals) and sweetened foods (e.g., cookies, cakes, candy).

Keep in mind that the opening for your new stomach pouch will be very small. Take only small bites and chew them slowly and completely. And don't lie down after eating. Otherwise, food can block the opening and might cause vomiting or pain under the breastbone.

Fluids

Be sure to drink plenty of fluids – at least two litres each day. Carry a sports bottle of water with you all day and keep refilling it. Remind yourself to drink even if you don't feel thirsty.

Never drink fluids while you are eating, and for 30 minutes before or after you eat. Otherwise, the fluids will wash food out of your pouch and make you hungrier. As with food, you will need to take small sips and not gulp.

Avoid:

- Carbonated (fizzy) drinks and straws as both can bring air into your stomach.
- Drinks that have a lot of calories or that contain sugar, fructose, or corn syrup.
- Alcohol – it contains a lot of calories but no nutrition.

Supplements

You will need to take daily vitamin and mineral supplements for the rest of your life. Depending on the type of surgery you have, these supplements can include multivitamins, vitamin D, calcium, iron and vitamin B₁₂.

Exercise

Physical activity is essential for reaching and maintaining your weight loss goals. Your doctor will advise on you how soon you can begin exercise after surgery. Once you have fully recovered, aim for moderate aerobic exercise at least 150 minute each week. Brisk walking, jogging, cycling and swimming are good choices. Try to include strength training 2 to 3 times per week as well.

Follow-Up

Long-term follow up with your doctor will be important. With regular visits, your doctor can keep track of your general health, weight loss, eating and exercise habits, and need for vitamins and minerals. Ask your doctor about support groups – they can be a good way to learn and share in a safe setting.

Adapted from:

- 1) Bariatric Surgery. Dept of Clinical Nutrition, Dept of Surgery. St Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton
- 2) Life After Bariatric Surgery. American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. <https://asmbs.org/patients/life-after-bariatric-surgery>;
- 3) Life After Weight Loss Surgery MedLine Plus, US National Library of Medicine. 2015. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000350.htm>

