

Gastrointestinal Oncology

Eating Tips After Surgery



During your recovery, your surgeon will ask you to maintain a **soft diet** to help with healing. Use these tips as a guide. If you would like additional guidance and direction on how to personalize your new eating plan, please contact Sarasota Memorial's Outpatient Nutrition Program at (941) 917-7468.

- Eat small, frequent meals (5 to 6 meals per day). After surgery, you will feel full quickly and will be able to eat only small amounts at a time. Stop eating when you feel full.
- Eat slowly and chew your foods very well.
- Avoid foods that are known to cause you problems. Otherwise, eat the foods you like. Symptoms usually get better over time.
- Eat a variety of foods.
- At first, you may have problems tolerating fatty foods.
- For the first few weeks, avoid drinking large amounts of fluid with meals. Small sips are OK. Drink most fluids 30 minutes before and after meals. Drink 48 to 64 ounces (6 to 8 cups) of fluid throughout the day.
- Try not to lose weight, even if you are overweight, because it can make you feel weaker and can delay healing. Your registered dietitian nutritionist can help you with ideas for maintaining your weight if needed.

Recommended Foods in the First Few Weeks	
Dairy	Milk products as tolerated, lactose-free or reduced products, sugar-free yogurt, sugar-free pudding, cheese, sugar-free ice cream
Protein	Tender/soft meat, poultry, beans, eggs, smooth peanut butter, cheese, cottage cheese
Grains	Crackers, pasta, plain breads and rolls, pretzels, rice, unsweetened cereals
Vegetables	Cooked vegetables, vegetable juice
Fruits	Soft fresh fruit, fruit canned in natural juice, unsweetened fruit juice
Desserts	Low-calorie gelatin or popsicles, sugar-free desserts
Beverages	Noncarbonated/sugar-free or low sugar beverages, water, diluted fruit juice
Oral Supplements	No added sugar Carnation Instant Breakfast, Glucerna, Boost Glucose Control, Ensure, (other options also available)
Condiments	Salt, pepper, mild-flavored sauces and gravies, other spices as tolerated, artificial sweeteners, low-calorie

Distress Foods in the First Few Weeks	
Dairy	Cocoa mixes, regular ice cream, chocolate milk, sweetened custard or pudding, yogurt, milkshakes
Protein	Fried meats, lunch meats, bologna, salami, sausage, hot dogs, bacon, tough/stringy meats, nuts, chunky peanut butter
Vegetables	Raw or fried vegetables. Cooked vegetables including beets, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, corn, potato skins, mustard or turnip greens
Fruits	Tough fresh fruits, dried fruits, canned or frozen fruits in syrup, sweetened juice
Sweets	Sugar-coated cereals, doughnuts, sweet rolls, regular popsicles, gelatin, high-sugar desserts, cake, pie, sherbet
Beverages	Carbonated beverages (even diet), regular soft drinks, sugared drink mixes, fruit-flavored beverages, sweetened iced tea or similar drinks, alcohol, coffee
Condiments	Sugar, jam, jelly