



Patient & Family Guide
2026

What to Eat After Whipple Surgery



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What to Eat After Whipple Surgery

- During Whipple surgery, your surgeon will remove:
 - › Parts of your stomach
 - › Your small bowel
 - › Your gallbladder
 - › Your pancreas
- These organs are important for digesting (breaking down) food. After surgery, you may need to change your eating habits. It is important to eat enough food while recovering from surgery.
- Following the tips in this pamphlet can help you:
 - › Feel comfortable during the first 4 weeks (1 month) after surgery
 - › Get the nutrition you need to heal
 - › Keep up or gain weight after surgery

Tips to get enough nutrition

Eat at least 6 small meals or snacks a day.

- › After surgery, it is normal to feel full quickly. It may be easier for your body to handle smaller amounts of food more often instead of 3 big meals.
- › Try to eat small amounts every 2 to 3 hours.

Eat slowly.

- › Take small bites and chew your food well. This will stop you from feeling too full and make food easier to digest.

Drink at least 6 to 8 cups (1500 to 2000 ml) of fluids a day.

- › It is important to stay well hydrated (have enough fluids) for healing.
- › **Do not** drink fluids with meals or snacks. Try to drink fluids 30 minutes (half an hour) before or after meals. This may stop you from feeling full too quickly.

Eat protein with each meal and snack.

- › Protein is important for healing. Be sure to prioritize it when eating.
- › Good sources of protein include meat, poultry (like chicken and turkey), fish, eggs, milk products (like milk, cheese, yogurt, and cottage cheese), tofu, and smooth nut butters (like peanut or almond butter).

Limit high fat, fried, and greasy foods.

- › These foods may be harder for your body to digest. They may cause pain, nausea (upset stomach), or diarrhea (loose, watery poop).
- › Try to eat foods with fat throughout the day, **not** all at once.

Avoid foods that may cause gas and discomfort for the first few weeks after surgery. For 4 weeks after your surgery, avoid:

- › Raw vegetables (including salads and coleslaws)
 - › Raw fruit (except for the “best tolerated” list on the next page)
 - › Baked beans
 - › Broccoli
 - › Brussels sprouts
 - › Cabbage
 - › Cauliflower
 - › Corn
 - › Dried fruit
 - › Green peppers
 - › Nuts
 - › Onions
 - › Popcorn
 - › Seeds
 - › Turnips
 - › Fizzy drinks (like carbonated water or pop)
 - › Chewing gum and hard candy
- **You can slowly start to add these foods back into your diet 4 weeks after surgery.**
 - › Try adding only 1 serving of 1 food at a time, so you know what food causes issues, if any.

- › It may help to keep a record of the foods you add.

Foods best tolerated in the first 4 weeks include:

Grains:

- › Plain, white grain products (like breads, pasta, rice, bagels, English muffins, crackers)
- › Cereals without seeds, coconut, dried fruit, or nuts

Milk products:

- › All milk products, except for those with nuts or seeds
- › Non-dairy drinks (like soy, almond, or rice milk)

Fruit and vegetables

- › Fruit and vegetable juices
- › Canned or cooked fruit
- › Soft, ripe, peeled fruit (like bananas, peaches, plums)
- › Canned or cooked vegetables (like carrots, squash, string beans)
- › White or sweet potatoes (cooked and peeled)

Meat and alternatives:

- › Tender (soft) meat, fish, poultry
- › Smooth nut butters
- › Eggs
- › Tofu

Do I need to take pancreatic enzymes?

- After Whipple surgery, your body makes less enzymes that help you digest food. Your health care team may prescribe pancreatic enzymes for you to take if you have:
 - › Bowel movements (poops) that smell bad, and are loose, oily, and light-coloured
 - › Pain, bloating, and/or gas
 - › Weight loss
- Talk with your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms.

High blood sugar levels after surgery

- If you have high blood sugar levels (diabetes) after surgery, you may need medications to help keep your blood sugar levels in a healthy range.
- Watch for symptoms of diabetes (like being unusually thirsty or hungry, and needing to pee a lot).
- Talk with your health care team if you have any of these symptoms.

What if my stomach is slow to empty?

- Your stomach may take longer to empty after surgery. Symptoms of this include:
 - › Feeling full after just a few bites
 - › Nausea or vomiting (throwing up)
 - › Feeling bloated or full for hours after a meal
- This should get better within a few weeks.

If your stomach is slow to empty:

- **Do not** eat big meals. Eat 6 to 8 small meals a day instead.
- Chew your food well, especially meat.
- Sit up during meals, and for at least 60 minutes (1 hour) after.
- Limit high fibre foods. Fibre makes you feel full quicker and stays in your stomach longer.
- Choose plain, white grain products instead of whole wheat. Choose cereals with **no more than 2 grams of fibre per serving**.
- **Do not** eat raw fruit and vegetables, nuts, seeds, or popcorn.
- **Do not** eat high fat, fried, or greasy foods. High fat foods take longer to digest and may cause you to not feel well.

If you have tried these tips and still do not feel better:

- Try a liquid or puréed diet. Liquid and puréed foods digest quicker than solid foods.
- Try liquids that are high in calories (like milkshakes or nutritional supplement drinks).

What if I get dumping syndrome?

- Sometimes after Whipple surgery, food may empty too quickly from your stomach. This is called **dumping syndrome**. This usually goes away in a couple of weeks.
- **Symptoms of dumping syndrome that may happen soon after eating** (within 10 to 30 minutes) include:
 - › Bloating
 - › Vomiting
 - › Nausea
 - › Diarrhea
 - › Stomach cramps
- **Symptoms that may happen later after eating** (within 2 to 3 hours) include:
 - › Weakness
 - › Sweating
 - › Dizziness
 - › Fast heartbeat
 - › Hunger

If you have dumping syndrome:

- Eat slowly and chew your food very well.
- Eat small meals often (at least 3 small meals and 3 snacks a day).
- Eat protein with each meal and snack.
- **Do not** eat sweets (like desserts, candies).
- **Do not** drink fluids with meals or snacks.
 - › Try to drink fluids 30 minutes before or after meals.
 - › Drink only half a cup of fluids with meals, if needed.
- Be sure to drink enough fluids **between meals**, at least 6 to 8 cups (1500 to 2000 ml) a day.
 - › Best choices are drinks with no caffeine or alcohol (like water, milk, watered down unsweetened fruit juice, and decaffeinated tea or coffee).
- Lay down after you eat.
- If you need nutritional supplements, use diabetic versions (like Boost® Diabetic, Glucerna®, Resource® Diabetic).

Do I need to take vitamins after surgery?

- After surgery, it may be hard for your body to digest and use some nutrients. A **daily multivitamin with minerals** can help. Choose a product made for someone of your age and sex. Talk with your pharmacist if you need help choosing a multivitamin.
- Ask your primary health care provider to check your levels of vitamin B12, folate, iron, and vitamin D once a year.

What if I am losing weight?

- Weight loss is common after Whipple surgery. It is important to eat enough to keep up your weight and help with healing.
- If you are losing weight, you may need to eat more food or eat more often. Try to eat foods that are high in calories and protein.

Try these high calorie, high protein snack ideas:

- › Hot or cold cereal with homogenized or 2% milk
- › Muffins, biscuits, scones, or bagels with cream cheese or smooth peanut butter
- › Scrambled, poached, or hard-cooked eggs with white toast
- › Cheese and crackers
- › Custard

- › Smooth peanut butter on crackers or white toast
- › Cold, sliced meat or poultry in a wrap or sandwich
- › Canned tuna or salmon with mayonnaise in a sandwich or on crackers
- › Pudding, yogurt, or cottage cheese with canned fruit or sliced banana
- › Ice cream, sherbet, or frozen yogurt
- › Smoothies, milkshakes, eggnog, floats (see recipes on page 11)
- › Whole milk, soy milk, chocolate milk, hot chocolate
- › Boost[®], Ensure[®], Carnation Breakfast Essentials[®], or other nutritional supplement drinks

If you are still losing weight more than 4 weeks after your surgery, tell your primary health care provider.

High energy, high protein drinks

- High energy, high protein drinks are a quick, easy, and tasty snack or meal supplement. They can be used instead of nutritional supplements like Boost[®] or Ensure[®].
- It is easiest to make these recipes in a blender, but you can also use an electric or hand beater.

Recipes

High Protein Milk (“Double” Milk)

- › 1 cup (250 ml) homogenized milk
- › ¼ cup (50 ml) skim milk powder
- Add milk powder to milk. Stir until dissolved (you cannot see the powder). Keep in the fridge.

Double milk can be used:

- › As a drink
- › In milkshakes
- › On cereals and fruit
- › In soups and puddings
- › In cream sauces and mashed potatoes

Milkshake

- › ½ cup (125 ml) homogenized milk
- › ¼ cup (50 ml) ice cream
- › ½ tsp (2 ml) vanilla extract
- Combine all ingredients in a blender. Mix well. Serve chilled.

Chocolate Banana Shake

- › ⅓ cup (75 ml) chocolate milk
- › ⅓ cup (75 ml) evaporated skim milk
- › 2 Tbsp (30 ml) skim milk powder
- › ½ banana, medium
- Combine all ingredients in a blender. Mix well. Serve chilled.

Orange Pro Frost

- › ½ cup (125 ml) orange juice
- › ½ cup (125 ml) ice cream
- › 2 Tbsp (30 ml) skim milk powder
- Combine all ingredients in a blender. Mix well. Serve chilled.

Yogurt Smoothie

- › 1 cup (250 ml) fruit (like banana or canned peaches)
- › ⅓ cup (80 ml) Greek yogurt
- › 1 cup (250 ml) whole milk
- › 1 to 2 Tbsp (15 to 30 ml) skim milk powder
- › 2 ice cubes
- Combine all ingredients in a blender. Mix well. Serve chilled.

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

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LC85-1366 © August 2026 Nova Scotia Health Authority

To be reviewed August 2029 or sooner, if needed.