



Patient & Family Guide  
2026

# Nutrition Guidelines After Bowel Surgery



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Nutrition Guidelines After Bowel Surgery

These guidelines will help with your healing, comfort, and bowel function (how well your bowels work) after your surgery. Talk with your dietitian if you have any questions.

1. If you are feeling well, you do not need to avoid any foods. You can go back to your usual eating habits right away, unless your surgeon tells you otherwise.
2. **Chew your food well.**
3. **Drink at least 2 L (8 cups) of fluids each day,** unless you have been told not to because of another health condition. Drinks like water, milk, and juice are best.
4. **Eat protein with each meal and snack.** Protein is important for healing and preventing infection.

- Good sources of protein are:
  - › Meat
  - › Fish
  - › Poultry (like chicken, turkey)
  - › Tofu
  - › Eggs
  - › Milk products (like cheese, yogurt, milk, cottage cheese)
  - › Nut butters (like peanut butter)
  - › Nuts, seeds, and legumes (like peas, beans, chickpeas, and lentils). You may want to start with small servings of these protein sources to make sure you can digest them well.
- 5. **Eat smaller meals more often.** It is normal to feel full quickly after surgery. If you feel hungry, eat a snack. Since your meals are smaller than usual, you will need to eat more often to make sure you are getting enough nutrition.

- **Snack ideas with protein:**
  - › Cheese and crackers
  - › Peanut butter on crackers, toast, a roll, or a biscuit
  - › Sliced meat or poultry in a wrap or sandwich
  - › Canned tuna or salmon with mayonnaise in a sandwich or on crackers
  - › Greek yogurt, or cottage cheese with canned fruit or sliced bananas
  - › Scrambled, poached, or hard boiled eggs with toast or an English muffin
  - › Trail mix with nuts, seeds, and dried fruit (try a small serving first to make sure you can digest it well)
  - › Nutritional supplement drinks (like Boost<sup>®</sup>, Ensure<sup>®</sup>, Carnation Breakfast Essentials<sup>®</sup>)
  - › Homemade protein shakes, milkshakes, or smoothies

## 6. If you have a lot of gas:

- **Eat less of these foods:**

- › All raw vegetables, including salads
  - › Broccoli
  - › Brussels sprouts
  - › Cabbage
  - › Cauliflower
  - › Corn
  - › Green and red peppers
  - › Legumes (beans, peas, and lentils)
  - › Melons (like honeydew, cantaloupe, watermelon)
  - › Onions
  - › Pickles
  - › Turnips
  - › Deep-fried foods
- Avoid carbonated (bubbly) drinks (like pop).
  - Avoid chewing gum or sucking on hard candy.
  - Eat slowly.
  - **Do not** skip meals. Eat regularly throughout the day.
  - **Do not** use straws.

## 7. If you have diarrhea (loose, watery poop):

- **Limit higher fibre foods, like:**

- › 100% whole grain and whole wheat products
- › Bran
- › Raw vegetables
- › Fruit peels and skins
- › Nuts and seeds
- › Dried fruit
- › Popcorn

- Avoid very hot or cold food and drinks (like ice in drinks).

- The following foods may help to make your bowel movements (poops) thicker:

- › Applesauce
- › Bananas
- › Boiled barley
- › Cheese
- › Oatmeal
- › Pasta made with white flour
- › Smooth peanut butter
- › Peeled potatoes
- › Soda crackers
- › Tapioca
- › Boiled white rice
- › Yogurt

- Dilute (water down) sweet drinks (like juice or sweetened, fruit-flavoured drinks) with water.

- Avoid too much caffeine (no more than 2 to 3 cups of coffee, tea, or cola a day).

- **Do not** drink fluids with meals. Drink most fluids 30 minutes before or after meals.

## **8. If you have constipation (not able to poop):**

- Drink more liquids. Try to drink at least 2 L of fluids a day. Drinks like water, milk, and juice are best.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Try eating 2 kiwis a day.
- Eat more whole grains, like:
  - › Whole wheat bread
  - › Brown rice
  - › Whole wheat pasta
  - › Whole grain crackers
  - › Quinoa
- Choose high fibre cereals (with 4 grams or more of fibre a serving).

**What are your questions?**

**Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.**

## Notes:

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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.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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