



Patient & Family Guide  
2021

# Nutrition Guidelines After Bowel Surgery



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# Nutrition Guidelines After Bowel Surgery

Follow these guidelines for the **first 4 weeks (1 month)** after surgery. They will help with your healing, comfort, and bowel function after surgery. After 4 weeks, return to your regular diet **slowly over time**. Talk to your dietitian if you have any questions.

1. **Chew your food well.**
2. **Drink at least 2 litres (8 cups) of fluids a day.** Best choices are drinks with no caffeine or alcohol (like water, milk, juice, and decaffeinated coffee or tea).
3. **Eat protein with each meal and snack.** Protein is important for healing and preventing infection. Good sources of protein are:
  - › Meat
  - › Milk products (like cheese, yogurt, milk, cottage cheese)
  - › Fish
  - › Poultry
  - › Eggs
  - › Smooth nut butters (like peanut butter)

4. **Eat smaller meals more often.** Snack if you feel hungry. It is normal to feel full quickly after surgery.
- **Snack ideas with protein:**
    - › Cheese and crackers
    - › 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
    - › Scrambled, poached, or hard cooked eggs with white toast
    - › Boost<sup>®</sup>, Ensure<sup>®</sup>, Carnation Breakfast Essentials<sup>®</sup>, or other nutritional supplement drinks

5. **Limit or avoid the following foods for 4 weeks after surgery:**

- **Higher fibre foods:**
  - › 100% whole wheat and whole grain products
  - › Bran
  - › Raw vegetables
  - › Nuts and seeds
  - › Dried fruit
  - › Popcorn
  - › Fruit peels

- **Foods that cause gas:**

- › **All raw vegetables, including salads**
- › Broccoli
- › Cabbage
- › Corn
- › Pickles
- › Legumes (beans, peas, and lentils)
- › Brussels sprouts
- › Green and red peppers
- › Cauliflower
- › Onions
- › Turnips
- › Melons (like honeydew, cantaloupe, watermelon)

- **Fried foods**

**6. If you have diarrhea (loose, watery poop), try the following:**

- › Avoid very hot or cold food and drinks (like ice in drinks).
- › The following foods may help to thicken your bowel movements (poop): applesauce, bananas, oatmeal, smooth peanut butter, boiled white rice, cheese, boiled barley, soda crackers, white pasta, yogurt, tapioca, and peeled potatoes.
- › 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.

## 7. **Foods best tolerated after surgery include:**

- **Grain products:**

- › White, low fibre, or up to 60% whole wheat products without nuts or seeds (like pasta, rice, bread, crackers, bagels, or cereals with less than 2 grams of fibre per serving)

- **Milk products:**

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

- **Fruit and vegetables:**

- › Canned or cooked fruit
- › Soft, ripe, peeled fruit (peaches, pears, bananas)
- › Diluted fruit and vegetable juices
- › Soft-cooked vegetables (like carrots, squash, green and yellow beans, peeled white and sweet potatoes)

- **Meat and alternatives:**

- › Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, smooth peanut butter, tofu



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For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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*Prepared by: Nutrition and Food Services*

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If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.