

WHAT IS THE POST-BARIATRIC SURGERY DIET?

If you have been researching bariatric surgery as a tool to help you return to a healthy weight and lifestyle, you will understand that your eating habits and diet following surgery will need to change significantly. Not only as a result of structural changes to the digestive system because of the surgery, but a healthy diet and lifestyle are always required to ensure a life-long change and to avoid weight re-gain.

You may have read that you need to follow a diet before your surgery (you can check out our blog about the pre-bariatric surgery diet here), but although this is required to make surgery safer, the post-bariatric surgery diet must be adhered to.

Post-op diet

Once you have had bariatric surgery your recovery diet will last six weeks.

First 2 weeks - fluid diet

During your first two weeks following surgery, you will still be in recovery. You will only be able to consume a diet of thin blended soups or smoothies, that are high in protein; some patients may choose to continue with the use of meal replacement shakes for convenience. Patients are all encouraged to ensure they are consuming adequate fluids during this time to reduce their risk of dehydration. During this time you will also start your chewable multivitamins.

As you are still in recovery, ensuring you follow strict guidelines during this period is essential.

- No eating and drinking at the same time to avoid unwanted gut symptoms.
- No fizzy fluids are allowed.
- Meal portions should be $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to avoid overeating.
- No lumps within blended foods to reduce the risk of gastric leaks, so need to ensure food is blended well.
- Protein is vital and requirements need to be discussed with your dietitian but typically you are aiming for between 60-80g of protein per day.
- Discuss supplements such as whey isolate powders or protein water and how to incorporate into your diet.

Weeks 3 and 4

Once you have made it through the first couple of weeks you are most certainly over the hardest part. During weeks three and four the only difference really is that you can make your purees/blended food thicker than during the first two weeks (when it should resemble liquid). You will still be required to adhere to the same eating guidelines as during the first two weeks.

Weeks 5 and 6

Weeks five and six see the much-anticipated introduction of actual food as opposed to just shakes or purees. During this time you can begin to consume a diet of soft foods, although solid foods are still not allowed, and you should still be following the same eating guidelines as specified during the first two weeks.

Week 6 onwards

Congratulations, you have made it to week six! Those first weeks following bariatric surgery are certainly challenging as they require significant dietary and lifestyle changes, so congratulations for making it through. During this period of recovery and adaptation, you will also have started to lose a significant amount of weight each week, which will continue as you follow your new diet and lifestyle.

From week six onwards you can start to slowly introduce solid foods to your diet. It is important during this time to ensure that you are using the new limited amount of space that you have to consume the right foods that are of high nutritional value.