



## **EATING AFTER YOUR ESOPHAGEAL SURGERY**

After your esophageal surgery, you can expect some difficulty swallowing. If food sticks when you eat it is called "dysphagia". This is due to swelling around your surgery site and will most likely resolve within a few weeks.

To help you through this temporary phase, we start you out on a ***pureed*** diet. Your first meal in the hospital was clear liquids. You should have been given a ***pureed*** diet by the time you left the hospital. We ask patients to stay on ***pureed*** diet for the first two weeks to avoid anything getting stuck near your recent surgery. Below are some suggestions for your diet in the first few weeks after your surgery. Do not be alarmed if your ability to swallow does not progress according to this plan. Everyone is different, and some take longer or shorter to heal after surgery. Use common sense. If you are having trouble swallowing a particular food, then avoid it. If food is sticking when you advance your diet, go back to the previous diet for a day or two.

In general, some simple rules to follow are:

- Maintain an upright position (as near 90 degrees as possible) whenever eating or drinking
- Take small bites-less than 1 teaspoon at a time
- Eat slowly. It may also help to eat only one food at a time
- Avoid talking while eating. This increases the amount of air you swallow.
- Do not mix solid foods and liquids in the same mouthful and do not "wash foods down" with liquids.
- Eat in a relaxed atmosphere without distractions
- Avoid carbonated (bubbly) drinks
- If food does stick-do not panic. Try to relax and let the food pass on its own. Standing and placing your arms over your head can help. Sipping strong hot black tea can also help.

## LEVEL 1

### PUREED FOODS: 1st 2 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY

Foods in this group are pureed or blended to a smooth, mashed potato-like consistency. If necessary, the pureed foods can keep their shape with the addition of a thickening agent. Meat should be pureed to a smooth pasty consistency. Hot broth or hot gravy may be added to the pureed meat, approximately 1 oz. of liquid per 3 oz. serving of meat.

**CAUTION:** If any foods do not puree into a smooth consistency, it may make eating or swallowing more difficult. For example, zucchini seeds sometimes do not blend well.

HOT FOODS	COLD FOODS
Pureed scrambled eggs and cheese	Pureed cottage cheese
Baby cereals	Thickened juices and nectars
Thinned cooked cereals (no lumps)	Ensure
Pureed trench toast or pancakes	Thick milkshakes
Mashed potatoes	Ice cream
Pureed au gratin, scalloped potatoes or candied sweet potatoes	Fruit or Italian ice, sherbet
Pureed buttered or alfredo noodles	Plain yogurt
Pureed vegetables (no corn or peas)	Instant breakfast
Pureed and creamed soups	Smooth pudding, mousse, custard
Gravies	Whipped gelatin
Sauces: cheese, tomato, barbecue, creamed	Sugar, syrup, honey, jelly
Any baby food	Cream or creamers
Alcohol in moderation (not beer or champagne)	Margarine
Coffee or tea	Mayonnaise, ketchup, or mustard

### SAMPLE MENU: PUREED DIET

BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
Orange juice ½ cup	Pineapple juice ½ cup	Pureed turkey
Cream of Wheat ½ cup	Pureed chicken noodle soup <sup>¾</sup> cup	Barley soup ¾ cup
Scrambled eggs w/ cheese ½ cup	Mashed potatoes ½ cup	Mashed potatoes ½ cup
Tea or coffee 1 cup	Pureed and cooled broccoli ½ cup	Pureed spinach ½ cup
Non-dairy creamer 2TBSP	Apple sauce ½ cup	Frozen yogurt ½ cup
Whole milk 1 cup	Coffee or tea	Coffee or tea

## LEVEL 2

After your first 2 weeks, you can advance to a soft diet.  
Keep on this diet until everything goes down easily.

<b>HOT FOOD</b>	<b>COLD FOOD</b>
White fish	Cottage cheese
Stuffed fish	Junior baby fruit
Baby food meats	Semi-thickened juices
Minced, soft cooked, scrambled/pouched	Nectars
Scuffle' and omelets	Canned fruit, Pineapple sauce, milk
Cooked cereals	Milkshake
Potatoes	Custard
Buttered or alfredo noodles	Puddings, including tapioca
Cooked and cooled vegetables	Yogurt
Soups	Fruit ice, Italian ice, Sherbet

### **SAMPLE MENU: LEVEL 2**

<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>
Orange juice ½ cup	Pineapple juice ½ cup	Soup ¾ cup
Oatmeal ½ cup	Minced beef 3oz with gravy	Minced Hawaiian chicken 3 oz
Scrambled eggs with cheese ½ cup	Mashed potatoes ½ cup	Mashed potatoes ½ cup
Tea or coffee	Minced broccoli ½ cup	Cooked spinach ½ cup
Whole milk 1 cup	Applesauce ½ cup	Frozen yogurt ½ cup

### **LEVEL 3**

After all of the foods in level 2 (soft diet) are passing through well you should advance up to the next level. It is still important to cut these foods into small pieces and eat slowly.

<b>HOTFOODS</b>	<b>COLD FOODS</b>
Poultry	Cottage Cheese
Ground or flaked meat	Milk
Eggs	Milkshakes
French toast or pancakes	Juices
Noodles or pasta	Canned fruit
Cooked vegetables, no frozen corn, peas, or mixed vegetables	Pudding, mousse, or custard
Soup	Green salad

### **LEVEL 4: REGULAR FOODS**

Foods in this group are soft, moist, regularly textured foods. This level includes red meat and breads, which tend to be the hardest things to swallow. Eat very slowly, chew well, and continue to avoid carbonated drinks.

<b>HOTFOODS</b>	<b>COLD FOODS</b>
Fish	Cheeses
Poultry	Fruits
Red Meat	Vegetables
Eggs	Dairy products
Bread and pasta	Cheeses