



Nutrition is a key component of your surgery recovery. Food nourishes you and helps your body heal from the stress of surgery. There are many areas to consider with nutrition such as protein needs, inflammation, vitamins and minerals, and constipation. When your doctor has given you the “green light” to consume solid foods following surgery, here are a few basic guidelines.

## Protein

Protein is especially important after surgery. It helps repair damaged body tissues, form antibodies to fight infections, and synthesize collagen which is necessary for scar formation.

Good protein sources include lean poultry, fish and seafood, nuts legumes and seeds. Red meats may trigger *inflammation*, so cut back on fatty red meats. When you do eat red meat, choose lean cuts of buffalo, venison, and other game meats, or the lowest-fat cuts of beef such as eye of round roast/steak, sirloin tip, top round roast/steak, top sirloin, bottom round roast/steak, tenderloin steak, or 95% lean ground beef.

Consider nuts, tofu, beans and vegetarian foods, such as tempeh and textured vegetable protein (TVP) to supplement your protein needs. Dairy products are also a source of protein, but they can cause *constipation*, so they should be used in moderation.

## Inflammation

There are several foods that may help to *reduce* your pain and inflammation after surgery, such as:

- Fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, trout, sardines, halibut, flounder or sole
- Walnuts, almonds, peanuts
- Canola, extra virgin olive oil, and soybean oils
- Flaxseed meal or flaxseed oil
- Soy products (soy milk, tofu, tempeh, edamame, whole soy beans)
- Onion, garlic, and green leafy vegetables
- Dark fruits (blueberries, cranberries, red apples, eggplant, red grapes)
- Green and black tea (most herbal teas are not known to have the same benefit)
- Turmeric is a mustard-yellow spice from Asia. Use it in cooking or buy in capsule form

## Vitamins and Minerals

Many vitamins and minerals can also help reduce inflammation, as well as accelerate wound healing after surgery.

**Vitamin A** – stimulates the immune response and helps form normal outer and inner skin. Good sources of Vitamin A include carrots, leafy greens, red bell pepper, sweet potato, and cantaloupe.

**Vitamin C** – is needed for the speed and strength associated with wound healing. It forms collagen in bones, cartilage, muscle, and blood vessels. Good sources include kiwi, oranges, tomatoes, strawberries, broccoli, bell peppers, and potatoes.

**Vitamin D** – is an essential nutrient in the formation, maintenance, and repair of bones. Good sources include fortified milk, egg yolk, salmon, tuna, and direct exposure of skin to sunlight (10 minutes, two times per week).

**Calcium** – is an essential mineral for bone repair/soft tissue healing, proper blood clotting, muscle contraction (especially normal heartbeat rhythm). Milk and milk products, as well as dark green leafy vegetables are good sources.

Zinc is involved in the early remodeling of collagen and may accelerate wound healing in patients following surgery. Primary sources include oysters, lean meats, fish, poultry, legumes, whole grain breads and cereals.

Copper is necessary for collagen formation, as well as bone and joint integrity. Copper is in most foods, but especially oysters and other shellfish, whole grains, legumes, nuts, potatoes and dark leafy greens.

### Constipation

It is important to drink plenty of water and eat fiber after surgery to prevent constipation. Try to eat whole foods that are higher in fiber (an orange instead of orange juice), and limit those that are refined or include additives like salt, fat, and sugar. Choose whole grain breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables (fresh or frozen) that are darker in color to increase your insoluble fiber intake. If you are able, try to exercise or be active in your daily routine. Exercise can stimulate the bowel.

Limit these foods that will likely *cause* constipation

- **Dried or dehydrated foods**, such as dried fruits (prunes are an exception, they can help to ease constipation), beef jerky and some types of potato chips.
- **Refined/processed foods**, such as white bread, white rice, packaged high calorie snack foods (such as potato chips, cookies, and pork rinds), and boxed meal mixes.
- **Cheese**
- **Milk and dairy products**
- **Red meat**
- **Sweets** including pastries, candies, cakes and other sugary foods

If constipation continues, you may try a high fiber “cocktail” such as this:

#### Prune Juice Cocktail

½ cup applesauce

2 tablespoons wheat bran

4-6 oz prune juice

Mix all ingredients together and store in a covered container in the refrigerator. Start with 1 tablespoon daily.

Gradually increase the amount per day until you find the amount that works for you

### Lack of Appetite

Sometimes it is difficult to eat after surgery because of a lack of appetite. This typically passes a few days after surgery, but it is important to continue eating nutritious foods during this part of your recovery. Failing to eat enough after surgery can delay the healing process.

If you are *not constipated* and are *still having difficulty with your appetite*, consider calorie-dense foods, such as avocado, potatoes, or a smoothie with dairy, fruit, and protein powder as necessary.

### Specific Guidelines for Patient

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This information is provided by The Portland Clinic LLP dietitians. Our dietitians can evaluate your current food patterns and provide nutrition guidelines. To make an appointment for an individual consultation at our Downtown, Beaverton, or South office, please call scheduling at 503-223-3113.