Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Diet and Nutrition After Your Whipple Procedure

This information describes dietary (eating and drinking) guidelines you will need to follow after your pancreaticoduodenectomy (PAN-kree-A-tik-oh-DOO-ah-deh-NEK-toh-mee). This surgery removes part of your pancreas, intestine, stomach, bile duct, and your gallbladder. A pancreaticoduodenectomy is also called a Whipple procedure.

Basic guidelines include:

- Eat smaller amounts of food more often.
- Focus on protein.
- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Avoid foods with a lot of fiber and foods that cause discomfort.
- Monitor changes in your bowel movements.

A clinical dietitian nutritionist will review this information with you before you leave the hospital.

Call 212-639-7312 to set up an appointment with your clinical dietitian nutritionist if:

- You are losing weight after you leave the hospital.
- You have any questions or concerns.

Recovering from your Whipple procedure

Your body will handle food differently after your Whipple procedure. You may need to change the way you eat during recovery from your surgery. It will take longer for your food to leave your stomach. You will not be able to eat as much after your Whipple procedure as you could eat before it.

Good nutrition is important for helping your body heal. Follow the guidelines below after your surgery. You can also use the sample menus at the end of this resource to plan your meals.

Dietary guidelines after your surgery

Eating is usually hardest in the first 2 to 4 weeks after your surgery as your body heals. You may also have trouble tolerating foods high in fat, sugar or both.

Focus on the following tips during this time. You can also use the sample menus at the end of this resource to plan your meals.

Eat smaller amounts of food more often

After your surgery, it's normal to feel full more quickly when you eat. It's easier for your body to digest smaller portions of food at a time. Try eating every 2 to 3 hours throughout the day. Aim to eat 5 to 6 small meals each day.

Focus on protein

Protein helps your body heal after surgery. Try to include a protein source in most of your meals and snacks during the day. Good sources of protein include:

- Eggs.
- Tender (soft) proteins, such as tuna salad, egg salad, and ground beef, turkey, or chicken.
- Chicken or turkey.
- Fish.
- Dairy products, such as 2% milk, yogurt, or cheese.

Protein shakes or smoothies may also be helpful.

Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated

It's important to stay hydrated after your surgery. Try to drink 6 to 8 cups (48 to 64 ounces) of fluid throughout the day. Taking small sips will help you stay hydrated without feeling overly full.

Eat slowly and chew your food well

Take your time with eating so that you don't get overly full. Chewing your food well to help your body digest it.

Avoid foods that cause discomfort

During the first month or so after your surgery, certain foods may cause discomfort, excess gas, and bloating. Bloating is when your stomach feels full or tight. If you do, it may help to limit or avoid foods and drinks that can cause gas, such as:

- Raw fruits and vegetables.
- Cabbage.
- Brussels sprouts.
- Cauliflower.
- Beans and legumes, such as lentils, peas, and peanuts.
- Fruits that aren't ripe.
- Carbonated drinks, such as sodas and sparkling or seltzer water.
- Foods that are high fat, fried, greasy, or spicy. This includes fried chicken, fish and chips, and spicy tofu or chicken wings.

As your body heals, you can try adding these foods back into your diet slowly.

How to manage your symptoms after your surgery

You may have certain symptoms after your Whipple Procedure. Not all people have these symptoms. Only follow the instructions below if you have the symptom.

Changes in bowel movements

After your surgery, your body will heal and adjust to your new digestive system. You may notice a change in your bowel movements (poop). It's important to monitor your bowel movements. Talk to your healthcare provider and clinical dietitian nutritionist about any changes you notice.

Problems absorbing fat

Your pancreas makes enzymes to help your body digest and absorb food. After a Whipple procedure, you may have problems absorbing fat. This may cause weight loss. It may also make it harder for your body to absorb the nutrients your body needs.

You may not be absorbing all the fat you eat if you have any of these symptoms:

- Bloating.
- Stomach cramps after meals.
- More gas than usual, such as burping or flatulence (farting).
- Increase in bowel movements.
- Indigestion (stomach pain).
- Changes in your poop, such as:
    - Steatorrhea (fatty or oily poop).
    - Floating poop.
    - Light colored or yellow poop.
    - Poop that is looser or softer than usual.
- Bowel movements that are very light in color, frothy, greasy, or smell foul.

While you're in the hospital, your bowel movements may look different. This is normal. Talk with your healthcare provider or clinical dietitian nutritionist if you have any of these symptoms. They may prescribe pancreatic enzymes to take with your meals and snacks. If they do, read *About Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy (PERT)* (www.mskcc.org/pe/pert)to learn more.

Early satiety

Early satiety is when you feel full more quickly than usual when you eat. This is very common after a Whipple procedure.

Here are some tips for eating with early satiety:

- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks.
- Drink most of your liquids before and after meals, not at the same time.
- Add foods that are high in calories and protein to your meals. Examples include nonfat dry milk powder, nut butters, avocado, oils.
- Avoid high fiber foods, such as raw vegetables.
- Do light physical activity after eating if you can. Talk with your healthcare provider about which activities are safe for you.

Delayed stomach emptying

After surgery, the remaining part of your stomach may empty more slowly than usual. This may cause you to:

- Feel nauseous (like you're going to throw up)
- Vomit (throw up).
- Have abdominal (belly) pain.
- Feel bloated.

These things usually go away a few weeks after surgery. Talk to your doctor about medicine to help your symptoms, if needed.

Here are some tips for eating with delayed gastric emptying:

- Eat low-fat, low-fiber foods.
- Have liquids with calories and protein instead of solids. This includes milk, diluted (mixed with water) juice, oral nutrition supplements, shakes, and smoothies. Read *Nourishing Smoothie and Hot Latte Recipes* (www.mskcc.org/pe/smoothies-lattes) to learn more.
- Eat small meals and snacks often.
- Chew your food well.
- Do light physical activity after eating if you can. Talk with your healthcare provider about which activities are safe for you.

Food choices after your Whipple procedure

It may take your body some time to adjust back to a regular diet. As your body is healing, use the following lists of foods as a guide during the first 4 to 6 weeks.

Food Group	Foods to include during the first few weeks after surgery	Foods to limit during the first few weeks after surgery
Dairy	• Regular dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, or cheese, if you can tolerate them. • Lactose free products, if needed.	• Yogurt with added fruit, nuts, or granola. • Full-fat dairy products. These may be harder to tolerate.
Protein	• Tender meats. • Fish. • Poultry. • Eggs. • Smooth nut butters. • Tofu.	• Tough meats, such as steak or pork. • Fried meat, poultry or fish. • Sausage, bacon, and hot dogs. • Dried beans, peas, or lentils. • Nuts and seeds. • Crunchy nut butters.
Grains	• White flour breads, rolls, bagels, pasta, crackers, and pretzels. • White rice. • Hot cereals, such as cream of wheat or creams of rice. • Cold cereals such as puffed rice, corn flakes, or corn Chex.	• Whole grain breads, bagels, rolls, pastas, and crackers. • Brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, and barley. • High fiber cereals, such as oatmeal, bran flakes, or shredded wheat. • Popcorn.
Vegetables	• Well-cooked and canned vegetables without skins, seeds, or hulls. • Potatoes without skins. • Strained vegetable juices.	• Raw vegetables • Fried vegetables. • Cooked vegetables known to cause gas. This includes broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, or onions.
Fruits	• Ripe bananas. • Melons. • Soft canned fruits. • Well-cooked fruits without skins. • Fruit juices without pulp.	• All fresh fruit other than bananas and melons. • All dried fruits. • Canned pineapple. • Fruit juice with pulp. • Prune juice.

Desserts	• Plain baked pastries, such as pound cake. • Cookies. • Ice cream, sherbet, or fruit ice.	• Desserts and sweets with nuts, seeds, coconut, and dried fruits. • Fried sweets, such as donuts.
Drinks	• Water • High-calorie and high-protein nutrition shakes.	• Carbonated drinks, such as sodas and sparkling or seltzer water.

Over time, you'll be able to tolerate different foods better. Most people can go back to a regular diet. You can add new foods to your diet as you feel comfortable.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if:

- You are losing weight after you leave the hospital.
- You need to go over changes to your diet.
- You notice changes in your poop.
- You have any other questions or concerns.

Sample menus

These sample menus have ideas for meals and snacks as you recover from surgery. These menus are meant to be examples. You do not need to follow these strictly.

Each menu has 6 small meals and snacks per day. Remember to drink 6 to 8 cups (48 to 64 ounces) of liquids throughout the day.

Foods with an asterisk (*) have lactose. If you're lactose-intolerant or find you are sensitive to lactose after surgery, choose lactose-free options instead.

Meal Time	Sample Menu 1	Sample Menu 2
Breakfast	• ¾ cup corn flakes • ½ cup milk* • ½ banana	• 1 scrambled egg with shredded cheese* • 1 slice of white bread toast with 1 teaspoon of butter • ½ cup fresh melon
Morning snack	• 6 to 8 ounces yogurt* • ½ cup of canned fruit	• 4 graham crackers • 2 tablespoons peanut butter
Lunch	• ½ cup chicken noodle soup • ½ turkey and cheese* sandwich with lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise	Chicken or tuna salad wrap • ½ cup chicken or tuna salad without celery • White flour tortilla • ½ cup canned mandarin oranges
Afternoon snack	• 2 ounces hummus • 1 to 2 ounces pretzels	• ½ cup cottage cheese* • ½ cup canned peaches
Dinner	• 2 ounces baked chicken • 1 small baked potato with sour cream* • ½ cup of cooked carrots with 1 teaspoon butter*	• 2 ounces baked fish • ½ cup cooked rice • ½ cup of green beans with 1 teaspoon butter*
Evening snack	• 1 cup sherbet	• 1 cup pudding

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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