

Laparoscopic Esophageal Surgery

Post-Operative Instructions

Please read over this handout carefully. While instructions may vary from patient to patient, this handout should give you a general idea of things to do to help you get well after your surgery.

Activity

You will likely feel tired for at least 1 week after your surgery. Take your pain medicine as needed in order to stay active, but rest as needed for recovery. Take short walks 2 to 3 times a day. This will help reduce the risk of blood clots after surgery. You may use the stairs as needed as long as you are not dizzy or weak. Make sure someone is around the first few times you use the stairs or exercise.

Driving

Do not drive until you have been seen for your first clinic office visit after surgery. Unless told otherwise by us, you may drive after your first follow-up visit and when you can react safely in an emergency. You will be sent home on pain medications. Generally the pain medications prescribed are Tylenol® #3 (acetaminophen with codeine), Vicodin® or Lortab® (acetaminophen and hydrocodone). You must not be taking pain medicines stronger than regular Tylenol (acetaminophen) at the time you are driving, nor should you have a great deal of pain, as this will affect your ability to react quickly. Also, DO NOT take Tylenol #3, Vicodin, or Lortab at the same time as regular Tylenol as there is Tylenol in both of them. This would give you too much Tylenol. If you are trying to take yourself off Tylenol #3 by switching to Tylenol, allow 6 hours between doses.

Lifting/Coughing

Practice 10 deep breaths and 2 coughs every hour for at least 12 hours a day for the first week after surgery. This will decrease your risk of lung problems or pneumonia. Do not lift heavy objects (more than 8 pounds) for the first 6 weeks. Also avoid pushing, pulling or stomach pressure for these first 6 weeks. When coughing, be sure to place a pillow over the incision and gently press inward to reduce the pressure from coughing on your incision.

Medications

Use your pain medicine as prescribed. Pain medications may cause nausea on an empty stomach so it is recommended you take it with food. For the first 6 weeks after surgery, all medications should be smaller than the size of a pencil eraser. If medications are larger, they should be crushed or in liquid form. Please talk to your prescribing doctor to see if medications should be changed after surgery because they are not crushable. If you feel constipated and have not had a bowel movement by the 4th day after surgery, you may take one ounce of Milk of Magnesia in the morning.

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Incisions

Your incisions have been closed with dissolvable suture on the inside and a special skin glue over the incision. The skin glue will dissolve so do not attempt to remove it from your skin. You may shower the day after surgery and allow clean, soapy water to run over your incision but do not expose your incisions to soaking in water (i.e. hot tub, bathtub or swimming pools) for the first 6 weeks after surgery. Do not put any ointment or creams over the incisions for the first 6 weeks after surgery or while the incision is open, draining or scabbed.

Diet

These nutritional guidelines have been designed to eliminate foods and beverages that might either impair swallowing or irritate the esophagus following surgery. Your diet will change temporarily for these first 6 weeks following surgery. Once your body has had time to heal, you can slowly resume to a normal, healthy diet on week 7. Please be aware that everyone's progress and tolerance for food is different. This diet will provide you with enough calories and protein to help you heal and return to your normal lifestyle as soon as possible.

General Guidelines:

1. Eat 4 to 6 SMALL meals a day.
2. Foods should be prepared so that they are moist, soft, and easily swallowed.
3. Eat slowly, take small bites, and chew thoroughly.
4. Drink plenty of liquids with meals. Try alternating bites of food with sips of fluids.
5. Sit in an upright position for 60 minutes (1 hour) after eating. DO NOT RECLINE!!!
6. Avoid alcohol, smoking, citrus or tomato products, caffeine and carbonated drinks.
7. No carbonated drinks for 3 months (includes soda, beer, carbonated water or anything with fizz/carbonation).
8. DO NOT chew gum or drink through straws.
9. Avoid all food products that can create stomach gas: dried beans, peas, lentils, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, and any food from the cabbage family.
10. NO bread or meat products until week 7.
11. Take one chewable multivitamin daily.
12. If you are having trouble taking in adequate amount of calories and protein, you may need to drink a nutritional supplement.
 - Examples: Carnation Instant Breakfast, Ensure, Boost, Glucerna (for people with Diabetes).
13. No straining or heaving lifting (more than 8 pounds) for the first 8 weeks after surgery.

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FULL LIQUID DIET	Foods to Choose	Food to Avoid
Day 1 <i>(day of procedure)</i> to Day 14 <i>(2 Weeks)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk <i>(no chocolate milk)</i> Carnation Instant Breakfast <i>(no chocolate)</i> • Cream of Wheat • Strained Creamed Soups <i>(except tomato, pea, broccoli)</i> • Yogurt <i>(no strawberry, raspberry or blackberry because of seeds)</i> • Pudding <i>(except chocolate)</i> • Vanilla ice cream • Sherbet • Protein shakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chocolate milk and any other chocolate flavored drinks • Citrus drinks: orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit • Alcohol • Carbonated beverages • Drinks containing caffeine: coffee and tea
SOFT DIET Weeks 3 and 4	Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Decaf coffee and tea • Non-citrus beverages <i>(apple, cranberry, grape)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as listed on full liquid diet
Milk and Milk Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk <i>(no chocolate milk)</i> • Yogurt • Ice Cream/Sherbet • Pudding • Cottage Cheese • Shredded soft cheeses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogurt or ice cream that contains fruit, seeds or nuts • Hard cheeses
Cereal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked cereal <i>(oatmeal or cream of wheat)</i> • Any cereal softened with milk <i>(except those in the avoid column)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bran cereals • Shredded wheat • Granola • Any cereal with fresh or dried fruit, coconut, seeds or nuts

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SOFT DIET Weeks 3 and 4	Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Fruit and Nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any canned, cooked fruit or fruit juice <i>(except those listed in the avoid column)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most all fresh and dried fruit Fruits with seeds or skins, such as berries, figs, raisin Unripe bananas All citrus fruits and juices Nuts, dates, seeds Peanut butter
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooked vegetables without seeds or skins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw vegetables Tomatoes and tomato products Gas-producing vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, coleslaw, corn, cucumber, dried beans, green pepper, lentils, onions, peas, radishes, sauerkraut, turnips Salads
Starchy Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mashed potatoes Baked potato <i>(no skin)</i> Soft, moist rice Noodles Macaroni Spaghetti Dry cereals softened in milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All breads – bagels, muffins, rolls <i>(until week 7)</i> Pancakes Waffles Dry cereal without milk Potato chips Crackers Popcorn
Meat and Meat Substitute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soft eggs Tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fried eggs or deviled eggs Beef, pork, chicken, turkey <i>(until week 7)</i> Peanut butter

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SOFT DIET Weeks 3 and 4	Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Fats <i>Eat in moderation!!!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter • Margarine • Mayonnaise • Mildly seasoned salad dressing • Cream: coffee, sour, whipping • Cream Cheese • Gravy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly seasoned salad dressing • Bacon • Nuts • Fried foods
Sweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sherbet • Gelatin • Puddings • Ice cream • Frozen yogurt • Popsicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desserts containing chocolate, coconut, nuts, seeds, fresh or dried fruit, peppermint or spearmint
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mashed potatoes • Baked potato (<i>no skin</i>) • Soft, moist rice • Noodles • Macaroni • Spaghetti • Dry cereals softened in milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickles/Olives • Black pepper, chili powder, ketchup, barbecue sauce, horseradish, onion and garlic seasoning • Alcoholic beverages • Carbonated beverages • Caffeine • Chocolate • Highly seasoned foods, herbs or spices

Weeks 5 and 6 – Canned, frozen or fresh fish without bones can be added back into the diet.

Week 7 and beyond – All other breads and meats can be added back into the diet.

If you have any questions regarding nutritional guidelines, please contact Jill Jarrett, Registered Dietitian, at (619) 543-5438 or email jjarrett@ucsd.edu

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Follow Up

You should follow up in the clinic 1 week after your surgery and 3 months after your surgery. You may be seen sooner if indicated by the surgical team. If you have not already received confirmation for follow up appointments, you may call our office to schedule them. **For Dr. Horgan, please call (619) 471-0701.**

For Dr. Jacobsen or Dr. Sandler, please call (619) 543-2897.

When Should I call the doctor?

Severe, persistent vomiting: You may experience vomiting if you eat too fast or too much. However, if you have persistent vomiting, or vomiting that looks black, bloody or like coffee grounds, this could be a sign of the start of an ulcer.

Diarrhea: Occasional loose bowel movements are not uncommon. However, constant watery diarrhea, especially with fever, can be a sign of an infection of the bowels.

Fevers with or without cough: This could be a sign of lung, wound or stomach infection.

Increased heart rate: If your heart rate is more than 100 beats per minute, this could be a sign of infection.

Sudden shortness of breath and/or chest pain: This could be related to a heart problem, such as a heart attack, or could be related to a blood clot to the lung (pulmonary embolus) or a lung infection.

Leg swelling and pain: Swelling and pain in the calf (back of your lower leg) could mean a blood clot formation in the leg, particularly if it is only on one side.

Passing out: This could be a sign of low blood pressure, which could be due to blood loss, low blood sugar or other causes.

Sudden new stomach pain: This could be a sign of leakage around your stomach or an infection in your stomach.

Wound drainage: Gold colored drainage from your incision is normal; however, call if the drainage is green, brown, has a bad odor, or becomes red and irritated.

After 4:30pm, call (858) 657-7000 and ask to have the doctor on call for the "blue team" paged or to have your surgeon (Dr. Horgan, Dr. Jacobsen or Dr. Sandler) paged. Please remove call block from your phone and refrain from using your phone so that the doctor may return your call promptly.