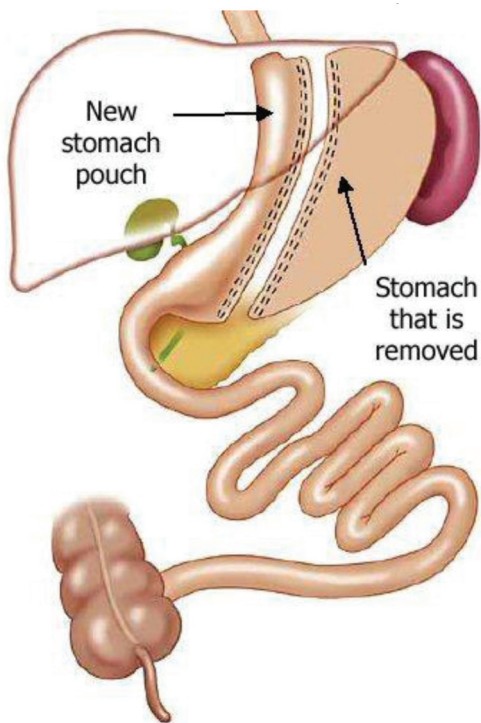


## Gastric Sleeve Guide

### A Pocket Guide for Any Gastric Sleeve Surgery Candidate



#### What is Gastric Sleeve Surgery?

A gastric sleeve, also known as a sleeve gastrectomy, reduces the stomach to approximately 25% of its usual size. The operation involves permanently removing a portion of the stomach and is performed laparoscopically.

The gastric sleeve is one of several types of weight loss surgery. It can be used as the primary method of surgical weight loss, or as part of a progressive surgical plan when the risk of carrying out another surgical option is too high. For example, if you have a large amount of weight to lose, a gastric sleeve can be followed a year later by a gastric bypass or duodenal switch procedure, once some weight has been lost and the risk of performing the more complicated surgery has been lessened.

Gastric Sleeve is a restrictive form of weight loss surgery. This means that it restricts the amount of food you can consume (by reducing the size of your stomach).

It is important to note that this procedure is not reversible. Once you remove a portion of the stomach it can never be replaced.

#### Who can perform Gastric Sleeve Surgery?

Any doctor who is board certified in general surgery is able to perform gastric sleeve surgery. However, it is recommended that you find a surgeon that specializes in weight loss surgery to obtain the best results and to have the lowest risks.

Although not required by law, surgeons specializing in weight loss surgery can become a fellow of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). The ASMBS ensures that all doctors are certified by the American Board of Surgery and have performed a minimum of 25 bariatric surgeries in the previous two years.

It is also recommended that you have your surgery performed at a ASMBS/ACS Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP) Center of Excellence. Hospitals that are designated a Center of Excellence must maintain the highest standards and certain volume requirements.

#### What are the Risks of Gastric Sleeve Surgery?

As with all surgeries there are risks associated with surgery and you should discuss all of the risks with your surgeon during your consultation. Some risks include but are not limited to leaks or bleeding from the staple line on the stomach, bleeding from the staple line, strictures in the sleeve gastrectomy and deep vein thrombosis (blood clots in your legs) that can go to your lungs called pulmonary embolism.

# 8 THINGS TO KNOW WHEN GETTING GASTRIC SLEEVE SURGERY

## 1. Digestive Changes

Unlike a normal stomach, a gastric sleeve does not digest food. For that reason, you will need to avoid tough foods, and you must chew your food well before swallowing. If you do not, these types of foods can cause discomfort, bloating and vomiting.

Over time, you'll learn the types of foods that your stomach can handle. Remember, bariatric surgery is a lifelong change: Even when your stomach is fully healed, you will not be able to eat the same foods you once did.



## 2. Portion Size is Key

Your new stomach pouch will be much smaller than your original stomach size.

The gastric sleeve surgery helps you to eat less by making you feel full quickly on a small amount of food. Immediately after surgery your pouch will hold only  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of food, which is roughly the size of half a deck of playing cards.

Over time, your stomach will adapt to accommodate slightly larger amounts of food -- approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup to 1 cup. Even then, you will need to take care to ensure you are getting enough nutrition from the foods you eat, due to the small portion sizes.

## 3. (Re)Learn How to Drink

Staying hydrated is also a new experience for any post-op gastric sleeve patient. There are a few key rules to follow:

- **Meal Time:** Because your stomach is significantly smaller, you cannot drink during a meal. In addition, you cannot drink 30 minutes before or after you eat. This is because liquids will push food through your system. Instead of feeling as full as you should, you'll keep eating.
- **Don't Drink Your Calories:** High-calorie drinks are not good for bariatric patients. In order to keep your stomach feeling full and to get the most nutrition out of what you consume, you shouldn't drink anything with more than a few calories per serving.
- **Keep Hydrated:** Water is the best choice for a healthy post-bariatric life. All parts of your body and mind will work best when you're well hydrated. Keep a water bottle with you whenever possible and take small, frequent sips. Aim to take in eight glasses of water (64 ounces) every day.
- **Avoid:** Caffeine, carbonated beverages (including seltzer, soda and beer), sugary drinks and alcohol

## 4. Focus on Protein Intake

Protein is an important part of any person's diet but it is especially critical that bariatric patients get enough protein in their daily diets. Protein not only promotes healthy healing during your post-op stage, but it keeps your body going in the absence of "energy" foods like carbohydrates and sugar.

Protein is found primarily in meats, beans, soy and dairy products. You can also supplement your protein intake with protein shakes and nutrition bars, but check the label first to ensure the ingredients will work with your new diet.

Post-op patients typically need between 60 and 80 grams of protein per day. For perspective, most meats contain between 6 and 8 grams of protein per ounce.

## 8 THINGS TO KNOW WHEN GETTING GASTRIC SLEEVE SURGERY continued

### 5. Avoid Sugar

Your post-op stomach can only hold several ounces of food at a time; for that reason alone, you must focus on taking in proteins first. There is, quite literally, no room in your diet for non-nutritious foods, fatty foods, and sugar!

Instead of high-sugar foods, look for low-sugar alternatives or find another way to give yourself a treat.



### 6. Take Your Vitamins

Gastric sleeve patients must take a vitamin supplement for the rest of their life. Your bariatric doctor will advise you on the best supplement for your specific needs. For example, calcium intake is a particular concern for women over the age of 50, whereas women of childbearing age may require iron supplements.

### 7. Make Healthy Choices

Your post-op stomach can only hold a meal roughly the size of the palm of your hand. Learning to eat after gastric sleeve surgery is about making good choices to feed your body in this limited space.

Obvious items to avoid include deep-fried foods, candy, cream and snack foods, but it's important to also be on the lookout for hidden fats. For example, a basic salad may seem like a healthy, low-calorie meal -- but with a high-fat, creamy dressing and no protein (such as chicken or fish) on top, it is not the best choice for you after surgery.

Work with your bariatric surgeon's nutritionist to devise a healthy, life-long eating plan. They will have a wealth of experience and information to get you started.

Also, learn to read and understand food labels, and appreciate how they affect you specifically. What works for someone following the Nutrition Facts may not work for you post-op, because the portions are wrong and you require higher quantities of specific nutrients.



### 8. Join a Support Group

In addition to working with your doctor's bariatric team, other gastric sleeve patients are a great source of support. Whether you're pre- or post-op, weight loss surgery support groups (like RealSelf.com) will help you prepare and adapt to your new lifestyle. They are also a great source to trade stories, recipes and tips for getting through the different stages of bariatric life.

# EATING AND DRINKING AFTER GASTRIC SLEEVE SURGERY

## After Surgery You Will Not Be Able to:

- Eat large quantities
- Drink with your meals
- Eat or drink quickly

## Foods & Drinks to Avoid

- Alcohol
- Carbonated beverages
- High-fat foods
- High-carbohydrate foods (bread, rice, pasta, etc.)
- High-sugar foods and drinks

**Your doctor or nutritionist will help you develop a healthy, post-op eating plan.**

**This typically occurs in four stages:**

### Stage 1 - Clear Liquids

You will gradually be placed on a clear liquid diet while you are recovering in the hospital. You will start with small sips of water, under the supervision of your doctor. Within a few days, you will slowly begin to drink other clear liquids, again in very small amounts.

Your doctor must know that you'll be able to drink normally and without complications. Being able to drink clear liquids is required before being discharged from the hospital.

### Stage 2 - Liquid Diet

Once you are at home, you will begin a liquid diet that lasts approximately one to two weeks.

Start with clear liquids and slowly build up to other types of liquid food, such as:

- Broths
- Protein shakes
- Decaf coffee and tea
- Low-fat yogurt

Drink very small amounts, and take breaks between each sip. If you are trying a soup or yogurt, make sure to strain out any whole pieces of food before drinking.

### Stage 3 - Soft Foods

For the next month (roughly two to six weeks post-op), your doctor will place you on a soft foods diet. Just like with the liquid diet, you will start with easier foods (such as broths) and build up your tolerance for more solid foods. For example:

- Scrambled egg whites
- Very soft, ground meats (including ground turkey and flaky fish)
- Cottage cheese
- Oatmeal, cream of wheat and grits
- Pureed chunky soups
- Mushy fruits like applesauce

### Stage 4 - Normal Diet

Your doctor or nutritionist will generally advise that you can start eating normal foods approximately six to eight weeks post-op, depending on your progress during the other diet stages.

The term "normal" is relative here -- this is your new, lifelong eating plan. Choose foods that are high in protein and low in carbohydrates, sugars and fats. Your smaller stomach will inhibit how much you can eat, so you must take care to eat the healthiest foods that you can. There is no room in your new diet for "empty" calories, such as sweets or junk food.



## Your Long-Term Success Tools

Gastric sleeve surgery gives you the tools necessary to move forward in your new life. However, it is up to you to use those tools and make your post-surgery life a success. You will need to work hard, exercise frequently, ensure you are eating healthy portion sizes, and make sure whatever you eat and drink is nutritionally good for you.

Possibly the biggest obstacles you will come up against are your own thoughts and habits. Your eating habits have been a part of your life for so long and you will need to work hard to ensure you don't fall back into the same food traps as you have in the past. This is why it is very important that you have a good support network around you.

## Your support network can be made up from several different sources:

### Family and friends

They will be with you the most and will need to help and encourage you. They may need to change their own attitudes toward food and will certainly need to adjust to your new lifestyle.

### Doctor-approved support groups

Your doctor may have a support group set up already, or they may work with an external support group leader. This group is likely to be made up of your doctor's former patients. These people will be in exactly the same position as you, at varying stages, and you will learn to help each other through your journey.

### Online support

Support can be found online through websites such as RealSelf.com, where you can meet people who are on the same journey as you. Online support groups are an invaluable source – someone is generally there no matter what time of day and night, you can read about other people's journeys, share your own story, ask questions, help each other through the difficult periods, and celebrate each other's successes.

With a clear nutritional plan, guidance from your doctor and a strong support network, you will transition smoothly to life with a gastric sleeve and – soon enough – to living life at a healthy weight.

**Article by:** RealSelf

**Sources:** RealSelf bariatric specialist, Dr. Shawn Garber, MD of New York Bariatric Group  
[www.stopobesityforlife.com](http://www.stopobesityforlife.com)

#### **About RealSelf**

RealSelf is the largest online community for learning about and sharing information and results for any medical-beauty treatment. Dedicated to helping people make suitable and empowered elective decisions, the site features consumer reviews, Worth It Ratings, real-time pricing information, and thousands of before and after photographs that collectively illustrate the 'real story.' The site also includes safety information and a Q&A with more than 3,500 board-certified doctors so visitors can interact with qualified experts and make safe decisions. RealSelf covers thousands of topics ranging from weight-loss surgery to cosmetic dermatology, plastic surgery, cosmetic dentistry, vision correction and more.

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