

Patient information

Oesophageal Tube / Stent

Contact Dietitian..... Telephone.....

A tube (stent) has been inserted into your oesophagus to help with your swallowing. The oesophageal stent is usually made of a metal mesh. The length of the stent depends on the length of the stricture or narrowing in your oesophagus and is usually 9-12mm (about ¼ - ½ inch) wide. They are held in position by the narrowing stricture and open up to make your oesophagus wider to allow food and drink to pass from your mouth to your stomach. You should now be able to take soft foods and manage a more varied diet, without feeling that food is getting stuck.

Once fully expanded, the stent cannot stretch, so it is important for you to avoid chunky and sticky foods that may block it. It is advisable that you discuss your new diet with a Dietitian. If you have not already been referred, you can request this with your Doctor or specialist nurse.

Advice for when you start eating

After the stent is inserted, you may initially feel a little bit nervous about starting to eat again. Don't worry, as these feelings are normal. Your confidence will improve in time. Here are some tips to help you:

- **Eat 'little and often'** – five to six times a day rather than trying to have big meals.
- **Eat slowly.** Don't rush to keep up with others, eat meals at your own speed. It is best to try to sit upright at a table to eat as it will help the food go down.
- **Take small mouthfuls of food**
- **Chew your food well before swallowing.** It is very important to chew your food thoroughly to make sure that you do not swallow any lumps of food that may block the stent. If you wear dentures, make sure that they fit properly.
- **Take sips of drink during and after meals.** Warm or fizzy drinks such as lemonade, Coca-Cola, ginger ale, and tonic water will help to keep the tube clean and prevent food particles from sticking. Be careful with fizzy/ gassy drinks if you are prone to reflux as this may make your symptoms worse.
- **Tablets can be broken down or crushed and taken with fluid.** Check with your doctor or pharmacist first, as it may affect the way they are released into your system. Some medication may also be available in liquid form to make swallowing easier.

When to start eating and drinking

DAY OF PROCEDURE

Take clear fluids only. For example: water, fruit cordials, black tea/coffee, apple or cranberry juice, Bovril/clear soup.

DAY 1 AFTER PROCEDURE

All types of fluids are allowed e.g. milky tea/coffee, hot chocolate. If you have been managing fluids and swallowing well, try a very soft diet. For example: soup, scrambled egg, poached/steamed fish in sauce, yoghurt, mashed banana, biscuits dipped in a drink, soft omelette, shepherd's pie with gravy, custard, ice cream.

DAY 2 AFTER THE PROCEDURE

If you have been managing a very soft diet, try more solid foods. These foods could include: soft bread (avoid freshly baked bread and cut the crusts off), soft vegetables, baked beans, pasta, soft cake, rice pudding

DAY 3 ONWARDS

Expand foods to eat a more normal diet. If you have any problems with more solid foods, continue with the softer diet until you feel able to slowly introduce more solid food.

What shall I do if I think the stent is blocked?

- Don't panic
- Stop eating
- Have a few sips of a warm or fizzy drink
- Walk around and take more warm or fizzy drink
- If the blockage persists for more than 3 hours, contact your GP or Specialist Nurse because you may need to be admitted to remove the blockage endoscopically.

What consistency of food should I eat?

- You should be able to eat solid foods of a softer consistency, large lumps and hard stringy foods may block your stent. You are advised to chew your food well. Try adding plenty of sauces or gravy to meals to keep them moist and easier to swallow.

If you are still experiencing difficulty with chewing or swallowing, it may be advisable to try liquidising your meals.

- Try to have a wide variety of foods in your diet to ensure adequate nutrition.

Food	Most easily managed	Best to avoid
Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any tender cuts of meat cooked slowly to tenderise • Minced or liquidised meats • Pates and pastes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gristle • Chunky, stringy or tough meat • Sharp edges e.g. the outer part of roast meat
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flaked or mashed with a sauce to prevent sticking to the tube • Try poaching, steaming and 'boil in the bag' fish in sauce • Fish cakes and fish fingers contain no bones but use plenty of sauce to moisten them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battered or dry fish • Fish with bones or fish skin
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrambled, poached, soft boiled, omelette, soufflés, egg custard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardboiled eggs (unless sliced finely in a sauce, e.g. egg mayonnaise) • Fried eggs
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grate hard cheese into sauces, flans and soups • Cottage cheese • Cream cheese and cheese spreads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunks of cheese
Bread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day old or toasted bread • Bread can be softened in stews and soups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh bread, because it may form lumps and block the tube • Crusty dry bread • Bread with seeds or grains
Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porridge/ ready brek/ cornflakes/ rice krispies • Use lots of milk to ensure the cereal is very soft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereals with nuts or dried fruit • Course cereals such as muesli, granola shredded wheat
Potatoes and starchy carbohydrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mashed potatoes • Baked potato without the skin • Soft cooked pasta & rice with plenty of sauce • Tinned spaghetti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard chips or roast potatoes • Be careful with crisps
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft, well cooked vegetables • Remember to chew well • Mash if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunks of raw or stringy vegetables and salad
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft fruit (peeled) • Tinned and stewed fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit skins / pith • Dried fruit
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biscuits dipped in drinks • Smooth peanut butter • Crisps that melt in the mouth such as wotsits, quavers, skips • Milk puddings and yoghurts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky sweets and toffees • Nuts and seeds • Chunky peanut butter

Menu plan for soft choices

- It is important to try to eat regularly – small, frequent meals are best.
- Have regular sips of warm or fizzy drinks during and after meals.

Breakfast:

- Porridge, Ready Brek, Weetabix, Cornflakes with fortified milk
- Scrambled eggs made with milk and butter/margarine
- Soft peeled fruit, for example banana, stewed apple/ plums/ pear, melon with yoghurt

Main meals:

- Tender meat or chicken in gravy/ sauce
- Shepherd's pie/ cottage pie
- Fish pie or fish in sauce (no bones), for example parsley or butter sauce
- Minced meat
- Tofu/ quorn or soya mince in smooth sauce/ gravy

Serve with:

- Mashed potato/ inside of baked potato (no skin)
- Soft well cooked vegetables, for example carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, mashed swede, parsnips

Light meals:

- Jacket potato (inside only) with butter and soft filling, for example tuna with / grated cheese
- Smooth soup
- Bread (day old or toasted) and butter/margarine with cream cheese, pate, or meat paste
- Omelette with grated cheese
- Tinned spaghetti with grated cheese
- Macaroni/ cauliflower cheese with plenty of sauce

Puddings:

- Milky pudding such as custard/ instant whip/ smooth rice pudding/ semolina
- Trifle/ crème caramel/ mousse/ thick and creamy yoghurts
- Ice cream or sorbet (no bits)
- Stewed fruit with cream/ custard/ ice cream
- Sponge and custard

Snacks:

- Milky drink such as hot chocolate/ Horlicks/ ovaltine or milkshake
- Snack, for example biscuits (softened by dunking in hot drink), cake moistened with custard, thick and creamy yoghurt, custard, mousse
- Cereal with milk

What shall I do if...

I have heartburn and indigestion...

- Eat small meals, 'little and often' – five to six times a day rather than trying to have big meals
- Sit upright to eat and try not to bend down or rush around until your meal has settled
- Take small mouthfuls of food, eat slowly and chew food well
- Avoid tight fitting belts and clothing
- To prevent acid from your stomach coming back into your gullet, sleep in a semi-upright position. This is best achieved by placing blocks (15cm) under the legs at the head of the bed so that the bed is at an angle of 45 degrees in addition to sleeping propped up on three to four pillows. It is also advisable to try not to eat too late at night, for example 2 hours before you go to bed.
- If your symptoms persist, discuss this with your doctor. You should already be prescribed an anti-acid medication.

I have a poor appetite and am losing weight...

- Try to eat small and frequent meals and snacks, for example every two hours.
- Be positive about what you do eat – every extra mouthful helps
- Try not to get out of the habit of eating. You actually need to eat to stimulate your appetite
- Your appetite may come and go, so it is important to make the most of the times when you feel like eating
- Don't worry if it isn't 'normal' foods at 'normal' times – if you fancy cereal at midnight, enjoy it!
- Try to relax and enjoy what you eat. Eat slowly and chew your food well, trying to rest before and afterwards
- A short walk before a meal or some fresh air may help give you an appetite
- Experiment with different foods and flavours. You may find that you like things you don't usually eat
- Try to make your food and drinks as nourishing as possible (see the food fortification section for tips)
- Accept offers from friends and relatives to help with cooking and shopping
- Convenience foods are a useful standby and can be just as nourishing
- If you have a freezer, try to prepare food in advance when you feel like cooking and store it for when you are not feeling so well
- Tempt your appetite by making food look attractive – use small portions on a small plate
- Sometimes the smell of food will be appetising; at other times it may put you off. If this happens, try to keep away from the kitchen while food is being prepared, or eat cold foods, which often have less smell

Food Fortification

If you are only eating small portions the following tips may help you to get more calories without necessarily having to eat more food. Start by buying full fat foods. Avoid “light” or “diet” versions of foods. These are not appropriate for you at the moment.

Milk: Add 2oz (4 tablespoons) of milk powder such as Marvel or “Five Pints” to 1 pint of whole milk. This can be used in the usual way in drinks, on cereals, in sauces and puddings.

To savoury foods add grated cheese, fortified milk, skimmed milk powder, crème fraîche, Greek yoghurt, smooth avocado, hummus, soft mashed avocado

For example:

- Cheese on mashed potato with milk, milk powder and butter/margarine/olive oil
- Butter, cheese or white sauce on vegetables
- Add 2 tablespoons of milk powder to a portion of white sauce
- Add grated cheese/ milk/ crème fraîche to soup
- Add cream/ sour cream/ crème fraiche/ smooth nut butters/ ground almonds to casseroles or stews

To sweet foods add fortified milk/ ground almonds/ smooth nut butters

For example:

- Fortified custard/ ice cream/ evaporated milk with sponge or fruit
- Make jelly with fortified milk instead of water
- Add 2 tablespoons of milk powder/ ground almonds/ smooth nut butters to porridge, suitable breakfast cereals, milk puddings and custard

I feel full up or bloated...

- Eat small, frequent meals with snacks in-between
- Try having your dessert half an hour after your main course
- Eat slowly and relax afterwards, but avoid lying flat

I feel sick...

Don't force yourself to eat when you feel sick. It is important to keep your fluid intake up to prevent dehydration.

- Clear, cold drinks may be better tolerated
- Try sipping fizzy drinks such as soda water, ginger beer or lemonade
- Sip these slowly, using a straw may help
- Solid fluids such as sorbet or jelly may be easier to manage
- Herbal, ginger or peppermint tea may soothe an upset stomach

Practical hints:

- Nausea may become worse when the stomach is empty so try to take regular snacks. Start with small frequent meals and snacks and build up to your more normal diet as the sickness subsides.
- If possible, a short walk in the fresh air before eating may help. Fresh air also helps to stimulate your appetite
- Avoid wearing tight fitting clothes
- Some people find that highly spiced or rich or fatty foods make them worse - avoid them if they do
- If the smell of cooking makes you feel nauseous you could try eating cold foods such as chilled desserts, for example yoghurts and mousses. Let a friend or relative cook if they offer.
- Try to relax and eat slowly in a well-ventilated room.

Your doctor can provide anti-sickness (anti-emetic) tablets if your symptoms persist. Ensure that you take them as prescribed. They help with symptoms of nausea as well as vomiting.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>