

AFTER LAP-BAND® SYSTEM SURGERY

For Dr. George I. Crawford, Jr.

Once the anesthesia has worn off, you may feel some pain. This pain can usually be relieved with ordinary painkillers. The hospital staff will help you get out of bed and start moving as soon as possible. This will help prevent blood clots, respiratory problems, and bedsores.

On the day after the surgery, you will likely be given an X-ray. This is so your health team can see that the LAP-BAND® System is in the right place. It is also to see that the new stomach outlet is open. You may be asked to swallow a liquid that can be seen on X-ray.

After a laparoscopic surgery, you will normally stay in the hospital for less than 24 hours. The hospital stay may be longer after the open procedure, if there are complications, or you have multiple medical problems requiring overnight observation. If there are no complications, you should be able to resume normal activities within a week or two after the surgery.

EATING AND DRINKING AFTER SURGERY

After your surgery, you will need a new diet. You should discuss this in detail with your surgeon and/or dietitian. They can help you learn and get used to the changes in lifestyle and eating habits you need to make.

It is very important to follow the eating and drinking instructions right from the start after the operation. That's because you must allow the new stomach structure to heal completely and in the right position. It may take a month or more for this to happen. It is important, especially in the early weeks, not to stretch the small stomach pouch above the band. Vomiting can do this, so it is important not to vomit. Vomiting can increase the chance of stomach tissue slipping up through the band.

THE FIRST DAYS POST SURGERY

Right after the operation, you can take an occasional sip of water or suck on an ice cube. You shouldn't drink more than this. The day after the operation, you can take a little more fluid but only a small amount at a time. Besides water, you should also choose clear liquids that have an adequate number of calories. To prevent nausea and vomiting, do not drink too much.

Liquid Diet (1-2 weeks post-op)

The goal during this early post-operative period is to protect the small stomach pouch. Only thin liquids can be tolerated at this time. It is also important to keep hydrated with lots of water. Other liquids recommended during this phase include:

- Clear broth or soup (with no vegetables or meat and not creamy)
- Skim milk
- Fruit juice
- No-sugar-added popsicles

Pureed foods (3-4 weeks post-op)

During this phase you may start having slightly textured foods. Aim for the consistency of baby foods. This will help you transition to more solid foods later. Because protein is so important to help you maintain muscle while you are losing weight, eat protein-rich foods first, and then move on to fruits and vegetables. Foods in this stage may include

- Pureed skinless chicken or fish
- Mashed potatoes
- Peas
- Low-fat yogurt or pudding

In the first few weeks, you may be able to eat foods that might not be allowed in your diet later, as these foods may contain too many calories. It is more important in the first few weeks to let your stomach adjust to the LAP-BAND® System than it is to lose weight. Your timing and progression into each dietary phase may vary. In general, you should follow the advice of your surgeon and/or dietitian about nutrition.

Soft foods (5 weeks post-op)

Your meals can now include tender cooked foods like fish and ground turkey. Now that you can chew, make it a habit to chew foods well. If you have dentures, be sure to cut your food into small pieces and chew it thoroughly. If you don't follow these precautions, you may experience vomiting, stomach irritation, and swelling. You could also have stoma obstruction.

If solid foods cause nausea and vomiting, go back to the liquid diet you had earlier. Then you can slowly add soft foods and eventually transition to solid foods. Always ask for advice from your doctor or dietitian that is specific to your situation. Vomiting may increase the incidence of band slippage, stomach slippage, or stretching of the small stomach pouch above the band.

YOUR NEW NUTRITION PLAN

When you can eat solid foods without problems you will need to pay close attention to your diet. Liquids will pass through the reduced stomach pouch quickly and will not make you feel full. The LAP-BAND® System was designed to restrict solids, not liquids. Drinking liquids during or immediately after meals tends to flush food through the pouch, and you will not get the prolonged feeling of satiety needed to help you eat less.

Many patients have a difficult time with solid foods during the morning hours. If this is the case for you, you can open up your LAP-BAND® System by starting with a couple of glasses of liquids before your first meal.

Too much food or big chunks of food can block the stomach pouch outlet. You can avoid this problem by chewing food well and eating small bits at a time. It is important to remember that your new stoma opening is approximately the size of a dime. Chew your food adequately so that it can easily fit through the opening.

Eat only three small meals a day and make sure that these meals contain adequate nutrients. Your stomach can only hold about 1/4 cup of food or 2 oz. at a time. Stop eating when your hunger is gone or when you feel comfortable.

10 IMPORTANT RULES

Here are 10 rules for eating, drinking, and exercise that will help you get the best results you can with the LAP-BAND® System. How willing you are to follow a new way of eating is key to making the operation a success.

- 1. Eat only three small meals a day.*
- 2. Eat slowly and chew thoroughly.*
- 3. Stop eating as soon as you feel full.*
- 4. Do not drink while you are eating.*
- 5. Do not eat between meals.*
- 6. Eat only good quality foods.*
- 7. Avoid fibrous food.*
- 8. Drink enough fluids during the day.*
- 9. Drink only low-calorie liquids.*
- 10. Exercise at least 30 minutes a day.*

Why the rules are important, and how to make them work:

Rule 1: Eat only three small meals a day

The LAP-BAND® System creates a small stomach pouch that can hold only about 1/4 cup or 2 oz. of food. If you try to eat more than this at one time, you may become nauseated. You may also vomit.

If you routinely eat too much, the small stomach pouch may stretch. That will cancel the effect of the operation. Frequent vomiting can also cause certain complications, such as stomach slippage. You need to learn how much your stomach pouch can hold comfortably and then not exceed this amount.

Rule 2: Eat slowly and chew thoroughly

Food can pass through the new stoma only if it has been “chopped” into very small pieces. Always remember to take more time for your meals and chew your food very well.

Rule 3: Stop eating as soon as you feel full

Once your stomach is full, your body receives a signal that you have eaten enough. It takes time, though, for you to become aware of this signal. If you hurry your meal, you may eat more than you need. This can lead to nausea and vomiting. Take time over your meal. Try to recognize the feeling of fullness. Then stop eating at once.

Rule 4: Do not drink while you are eating

This operation can work only if you eat solid food. If you drink at mealtimes, the food you have eaten becomes liquid. Then the effectiveness of the LAP-BAND® System is greatly reduced. You should not drink anything for one to two hours after a meal. That way you can keep the feeling of fullness as long as possible.

Rule 5: Do not eat between meals

After a meal, do not eat anything else until the next meal. Eating snacks between meals is one of the major reasons for weight loss failure. It is very important to break this habit.

Rule 6: Eat only good quality foods

With the LAP-BAND® System in place, you should be able to eat only a small amount. So the food you eat should be as healthy as possible. Do not fill your small stomach pouch with “junk” food that lacks vitamins and other important nutrients. Your meals should be high in protein and vitamins. Fresh vegetables, fruit, meat, and cereals are good foods to choose. Foods high in fat and sugar are not. You may eat apples and oranges, but try to avoid orange juice and apple juice. Ask your doctor or dietitian before you take any vitamin supplements.

Note: Solid food is more important than liquid food. The LAP-BAND® System will have little or no effect if you eat only liquid food. Liquid food passes through the stomach outlet very quickly and does not make you feel full.

Rule 7: Avoid fibrous food

Food such as asparagus that contains many fibers can block the stoma. That's because you can't chew this food well enough to break it up into small pieces and your saliva can't break it down. Fibrous food should be avoided. If you would like to eat asparagus or other fibrous foods once in a while, then you must be sure to cook them well, cut them into very small pieces first, and then chew thoroughly.

Rule 8: Drink enough fluids during the day

If you lose weight, your fat content will drop. This results in waste products. You will need to drink large amounts of liquid every day in order to urinate more and excrete these waste products from your body. Individual needs will vary, but you should drink at least 6-8 glasses of water a day. Remember: you should only drink water, tea, or coffee (without milk or cream and sugar). Also, keep your food and drinks completely separate during the day.

Rule 9: Drink only low-calorie liquids

Drinks, including those containing calories, simply run through the narrow outlet created by the band. If you drink liquids high in calories, you will lose little weight, even if you otherwise follow your diet.

Rule 10: Exercise at least 30 minutes a day

This rule is just as important as the other nine rules. Since physical exercise consumes energy and burns calories, it is very important to successful weight loss.

Exercise can help improve your general health. Your size may make it hard for you to exercise as much as you should. But get started, even if it is a little at first. The more weight you lose, the easier it should get. Start with simple exercises, such as walking and swimming. Gradually expand your program to include more vigorous forms of exercise such as cycling, jogging, and aerobics. Increase your activity level in the course of daily living. For example, stand rather than sit, walk rather than stand, be outside rather than inside, walk rather than drive, climb the stairs rather than use the elevator, etc.

Important: Always check with your doctor about the amount and type of exercise that is best for you.

Note: Although these rules restrict your food intake and the types of food you are able to eat, make sure to keep your diet as varied and balanced as possible.

Good Food Choices

Use this section to help you plan what you eat. You may choose what you would like from each of these food groups each day:

Fruits and vegetables

- 1 to 2 servings of fresh fruit daily
- 2 to 3 servings of fresh vegetables daily

Breads and cereals

- 1 small portion of low-sugar cold or hot cereal
- 1/2 to 1 slice of toasted whole wheat or rye bread each day—Note: some patients have difficulty eating bread

Meat, fish, poultry, and eggs

1 oz. to 2 oz. of meat, fish, or poultry or one egg each day. (Remove all visible fat from the meat. Remove the skin from the poultry. Prepare the meat in ways that need very little fat. Grilling, steaming, microwaving, or boiling are all good ways to do this.) Note: some patients have difficulty eating meat.

Dairy products

Milk and yogurt are calories in liquid form. However, these types of food have calcium, which makes them an important part of a healthy daily diet, so choose a maximum of 2 cups of skimmed milk or low-fat yogurt and 1 oz. of cheese a day.

Fats

Restrict the use of fat to 3 to 4 teaspoons of margarine, butter, or oil per day. You can have low-fat salad dressings and mayonnaise in moderation.

Drinks

Drink as many calorie-free liquids per day as you wish (though not with meals).

Suitable drinks are

- Tea or coffee (black) with low-calorie sweetener
- Water
- Non-carbonated beverages containing few or no calories

Some doctors have reported that carbonated beverages may contribute to enlargement of the small pouch and recommend they be avoided.

Foods to avoid

Some foods have a concentrated supply of calories with little nutritional value and should be avoided as much as possible. They include foods such as:

- Syrups
- Cakes
- Biscuits
- Jam
- Honey
- Pies
- Chips
- Pastries

Alcoholic drinks should also be consumed in moderation, for example a glass of wine per day.

Common problem foods

Some foods have difficulty passing through the opening of the stoma and may cause blockage. These include foods such as

- Dry meat
- Shrimp
- Untoasted or doughy bread
- Pasta
- Rice
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruit
- Fibrous vegetables like corn, asparagus, and celery
- Nuts
- Coconut
- Popcorn
- Greasy or fried food
- Seeds and skins of fruits and vegetables
- Membrane of citrus fruits

Introduce these foods slowly and individually to see if they are tolerated. Always be careful, chew well, and follow your surgeon's or dietitian's advice.