

All you need to know about diet and weight loss surgery (intra-gastric balloon)

This leaflet contains all the information you need to maximise your success following weight loss surgery. It includes information on:

- The actual procedure
- Food reintroduction after balloon insertion
- Guidelines for success following balloon insertion
- Trouble shooting tips

If you have any questions, please contact your dietitian or nurse:

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What is the intra-gastric balloon?

- The intra-gastric balloon is a silicon balloon about the size of a large grapefruit which is filled with saline. It sits in the top of the stomach and helps to limit the amount of food you can eat by making you feel full.
- It is inserted by an endoscopic procedure performed in theatre under sedation or light general anaesthetic, normally as a day case procedure. This means no incisions are necessary. The balloon is passed through your mouth and down into your stomach using an endoscope (a thin, flexible tube that has a light and a camera on one end).
- The balloon needs to be removed after 6 months
- A few people do not tolerate the balloon very well and may need to have it removed early, but most people do very well and will lose between 20-30% of their excess weight over the 6 month period.

Before balloon insertion

Do not have anything to eat or drink 12 hours before your appointment, but you can drink water up to 2 hours before your appointment.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are taking medication for diabetes you may need to adjust your quantities. Please check with your nurse, GP or consultant.

If you have any questions, please contact your dietitian.

Food reintroduction after balloon insertion

Following your balloon insertion it will take around 1-2 weeks to get on to normal foods. You will need to start on liquids, gradually moving on to purees then semi solids. You should be on solids by the start of the third week.

Day 1-7: Fluids only

You can drink thin soups, fruit juices and milk. No solid foods should be eaten. You should not exceed 1000kcal per day.

You should drink plenty of fluids – up to 2 litres per day, but you should sip slowly. You should avoid caffeine containing drinks, fizzy drinks, high calorie drinks.

Day 8-10: Puree Foods

Once you are tolerating fluids well, you can start introducing puree foods into your meals. You can eat normal foods as long as they are pureed. Make sure you include protein at every meal. Don't worry if you are not able to eat all that much, and remember to stop eating if you feel discomfort or pressure.

Day 11-14: Semi-solid diet

You can now start eating a semi-solid diet which can include foods like porridge, thick soups, mashed fruit, egg, cottage cheese, canned tuna, yoghurt etc.

Day 15 onwards: Solid diet

You are now ready to continue on your long-term eating plan. Remember, you are not just eating small amounts to reduce your calorie intake and lose weight, but you are also aiming for a healthy nutritious eating plan. It is critical that the food you eat is of good quality and has a high nutritional value.

- Aim for 3 balanced meals per day – try not to graze or snack between meals. Your daily calorie intake should be between 900-1500kcal.
- To get the most success from the balloon, you must wait about 30 - 45 minutes after eating before having a drink – this will also help to wash any food debris that may have become stuck to the balloon.
- Drink small quantities throughout the day. Aim to have one glass of water 30-45 minutes before each meal. Do not allow yourself to become too thirsty as you will not be able to drink large quantities at a time.
- Avoid fizzy/carbonated drinks.
- Avoid drinks containing caffeine.
- Chew all food really well – try not to be distracted at meal times and take time over each meal.
- Aim to eat off a side plate to help reduce your portions.
- Avoid high fat, high calorie foods, snacks and drinks as these will not assist with weight loss.

- Some people report problems with certain foods such as tough meat and bread - meat is better tolerated when cooked until really tender and bread is often better tolerated as toast.
- You do not need to avoid any specific foods bearing in mind that successful weight loss depends on following a balanced diet. If you choose to eat foods or drinks high in calories frequently, your calorie intake may still exceed your energy expenditure and you will not lose weight.
- A multivitamin and mineral supplement may be recommended to ensure all your micronutrient requirements are met. The length of time you should take this depends on the quality of your diet and you can discuss this with your dietitian.

It is important to view the balloon as a tool to aid successful weight loss. If you do not begin addressing any underlying issues relating to your eating habits and work towards making permanent lifestyle changes you are unlikely to be as successful and any weight loss achieved may not be permanent.

After the balloon removal you must continue to follow the changes you have made to avoid weight regain.

A healthy diet

There are five main food groups and a healthy diet comprises a mix of them:

- Protein foods – such as meat, fish, eggs, beans – include 2-3 portions per day. You must be particularly careful to chew meat, chicken and fish thoroughly before you swallow – the recommended bite size is the size of a 20p piece. Eat the protein part of your meal first.
- Milk and dairy – choose low-fat cheese and limit amount to 30-60g (1-2 oz). Choose skimmed milk and low fat yogurt varieties.
- Fruit and vegetables – try to have 4-5 portions per day. A small glassful of unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice counts as one portion.
- Carbohydrates – bread, potatoes and cereals. One small portion at each meal will be fine.
- Fatty and sugary foods – use a small amount of olive oil for cooking and replace puddings with a low fat yoghurt or stewed fruit.
- Fluids.
- Choose non-carbonated fluids. Avoid diet and/or regular fizzy drinks.
- Your best choices for fluids are water (try squeezing some lemon into water), artificially sweetened, non-carbonated flavoured waters, decaffeinated coffee or tea, herbal teas, clear soups, and diluted 100 percent unsweetened fruit juices.
- Read labels carefully to be sure your healthy sounding drinks do not contain lots of calories.
- Do not forget that alcoholic drinks can be high in calories, so moderate your intake.
- Aim for 10 x 250ml glasses of fluid a day.

Troubleshooting:

- Regurgitation – if you are taking your medication and are experiencing regurgitation, it probably means that your portion sizes are too big and you will need to decrease the amount you eat at a meal. It could also be a sign that you are not drinking enough fluids. Remember to drink regularly throughout the day.
- Wind – excess wind can be caused by eating too fast or using straws.
- Nausea – this is common for the first few days as your stomach adjusts to the balloon. You will almost certainly feel uncomfortable and may well experience nausea, bloating, diarrhoea and cramping. These side effects are temporary and normal and if necessary your clinician can prescribe medication to manage this. However, if these symptoms last for more than a few days, or if you are experiencing persistent vomiting, contact your nurse or dietitian immediately. Longer term, nausea can be made worse by eating fatty foods.
- Heaving feeling – this can be caused by not drinking enough fluids.
- Halitosis (bad breath) – this can be caused by food sticking to the balloon. Rinse the balloon by drinking some water. It is usually recommended to avoid fizzy drinks, but on this occasion, sparkling water may be helpful.
- Blue/green coloured urine or stools – a blue dye is normally added to the saline that is injected into the balloon, so that in the rare event that the balloon were to leak, you would know immediately by the change in colour of your urine or stools. If this were to happen, please contact your nurse or dietitian immediately or go to your nearest Accident & Emergency Department if out of hours.

Diet prior to balloon removal

Your stomach needs to be completely empty to make your balloon removal safe.

One week before removal

Return to semi-solid diet, moving to liquids only for the last day, then nothing to eat or drink for 12 hours before appointment.

For more information about the Trust, visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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