

Advice following anti-reflux surgery

This leaflet will try to answer some of the questions you may have following anti-reflux surgery. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything further you would like to know.

Immediately after the operation

As soon as you have recovered from the anaesthetic you will be allowed sips of fluid. If they are tolerated you will be able to progress gradually onto sloppy foods.

The ward staff will encourage you to move around. It is usual for the wounds to feel sore at first and some patients experience shoulder pain caused by the after effects of gas used in the operation. This should go within 72 hours.

Returning to normal eating

In the first few weeks following anti-reflux surgery you may experience some difficulty swallowing. This is because the new valve that has been created at the lower end of the oesophagus will need time to 'settle down'. If food cannot pass into the stomach easily it will cause some discomfort. To avoid this and to allow time for healing, you are advised to avoid bread (including pizza), roast and boiled potatoes, chips and lumpy pieces of meat or fish for the first 4 weeks. Also avoid beef steak and burgers for the first 4 weeks.

It is a good idea to start with sloppy or pureed foods and progress onto more solid foods as your tolerance increases (see menu ideas later in this leaflet). Food should be cut into small pieces and chewed well before swallowing. Poultry, fish and minced meat may be eaten, preferably with a sauce or plenty of gravy.

You can also help the passage of food into the stomach by drinking small sips of water/squash with your meals. Drink slowly as it may be difficult to drink large quantities at once. You may have difficulty expelling wind from your stomach and you may not be able to burp or vomit. An increased amount of air in your stomach can be uncomfortable so it is a good idea to avoid all wind-producing foods, such as baked beans, onions, cabbage, turnip and particularly fizzy beverages (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) and beer/lager for 6 weeks. Drinking hot peppermint water/tea may help. Over the counter medications for trapped wind such as *Deflatine* or *Windeeze* may also help.

Because part of your stomach has been used to create the new valve, your stomach is effectively smaller than it was before the operation. You will probably find that you will feel full up after eating a small amount. It is best to eat little and often and to avoid eating large meals until this feels comfortable. It is not uncommon for patients to lose weight in the first

few weeks. Patients vary in the time taken to return to normal eating.

It is normal to experience excessive flatulence (wind) after this operation. Charcoal tablets, available from your chemist may help with this.

Stitches

You will have 5 small cuts, between 5mm and 10mm in length. The stitches are all sited below the skin level and will dissolve.

Medication

Painkillers such as paracetamol are usually sufficient to relieve discomfort whilst at home but if necessary stronger tablets may be prescribed from the ward or your GP. It is not usually necessary to continue with your anti-reflux medication following surgery unless you are taking them for other reasons such as to prevent recurrent stomach ulcers.

Driving

You should be able to drive within 2 weeks. Check that you can perform an emergency stop safely and are comfortable wearing a seatbelt.

Exercise and return to work

It is advisable to rest for 3-4 days and then resume normal activities gradually. Heavy lifting and strenuous sporting activities should be avoided for at least 4 weeks.

You may need 2-4 weeks off work, depending on the nature of your job. If your job is desk-based you may return to work sooner.

If your operation was converted to an open procedure, you will be given additional information regarding your convalescence.

Follow up

A follow up out patient appointment will be made for you upon discharge or soon after with your consultant surgeon. This will be arranged for you, six to eight weeks following surgery.

Dietary advice in the first few weeks

A balanced diet

A balanced diet is one that has variety and contains adequate amounts of protein, vitamins and energy-producing foods essential for health. This can be achieved by choosing soft foods from the groups listed below.

- Cereals: lump-free porridge, pasta, breakfast cereals soaked in milk, creamed potato.
- Meat, fish, eggs and beans: e.g. tender meat, poached fish, scrambled eggs, omelettes, pureed pulses or lentils.
- Milk, cheese and yoghurt: e.g. soft cheeses, cheese sauces, grated cheese, custard, milk puddings, smooth yoghurts, fromage frais.
- Fruit and vegetables: soft fruits, e.g. pears, bananas, tinned and stewed fruit, fruit juice; soft tender vegetables, e.g. cauliflower cheese, carrots, mashed swede.

If you are losing weight the following may help:

- Eat little and often.
- Fortify your milk by whisking 2oz (4 tblsp) dried milk powder into each pint and use this for sauces and soups.
- Add minced meat, chicken, grated cheese or pureed pulses to soups.
- Add cream, evaporated or condensed milk, sugar, jam or honey to puddings.
- Take drinks such as *Build Up* or *Complan* as a nourishing drink between meals. They can occasionally be used to replace a meal.

Some menu ideas to try

Below are some suitable meal ideas. You should start with a pureed diet but should be able to progress onto a soft diet within a few days.

Ideas for breakfast

Fruit juice plus either:

- Smooth porridge made with milk and sugar.
- *Ready Brek* with milk and seedless jam.
- *Weetabix* with milk and sugar.
- Pureed stewed fruit and natural yoghurt.

Ideas for main meals

- Chicken casserole, mashed carrots, creamed potatoes.
- Poached fish with cheese sauce, creamed potatoes.
- Pasta with creamy mushroom sauce and green beans.
- Finely minced beef or lamb in gravy, mashed swede, creamed potatoes.

Ideas for light lunch

- Cauliflower cheese, creamed potatoes.
- Macaroni cheese.
- Pureed thick vegetable soup or lentil soup.
- Mushroom omelette.

Ideas for desserts

- Pureed stewed fruit with custard.
- Ground rice pudding with seedless jam.
- Fruit fool.
- Blancmange.
- Ice cream and jelly.
- Egg custard.

Between meal snacks

- Fruit puree milkshakes.
- Mousses.
- Fruit flavoured yoghurt or fromage frais.
- Savoury dips, e.g. hummus, taramasalata.
- *Weetabix* with milk and sugar.

Nourishing drinks

- *Ovaltine*, *Horlicks*, *Bournvita*, hot chocolate.
- Milkshake enriched with ice cream.
- Drinks such as *Build Up* and *Complan*.

Some general advice to remember

- Chew your food well before swallowing.
- Moisten foods with sauces and gravies.
- Eat little and often.
- Drink fluids slowly.
- Gradually increase your solid food.

Who to contact if you have a problem

If you are having any difficulties, advice will be sought from one of the Upper GI Surgical Team, Mr M Booth, Miss M Sampson, Mr J Ramus, Mr M Mahmalat or Mr G Jones. Contact the GI Physiology Practitioners on: **0118 322 7725**. This service is open Monday to Thursday. If you leave a message on our voicemail we will contact you as soon as possible. If you need urgent medical advice, please call your own GP or ring NHS 111.

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

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

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