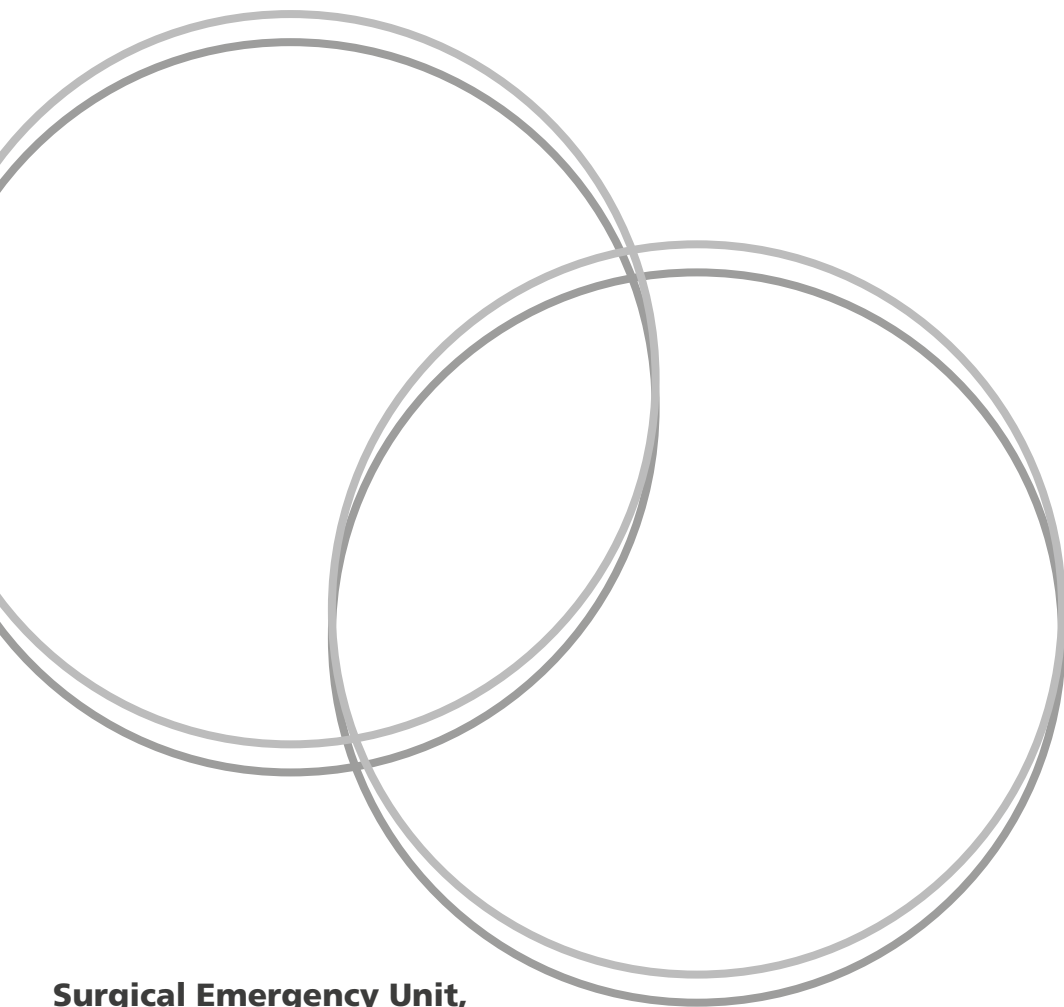




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Starting to eat following bowel surgery

Information for patients

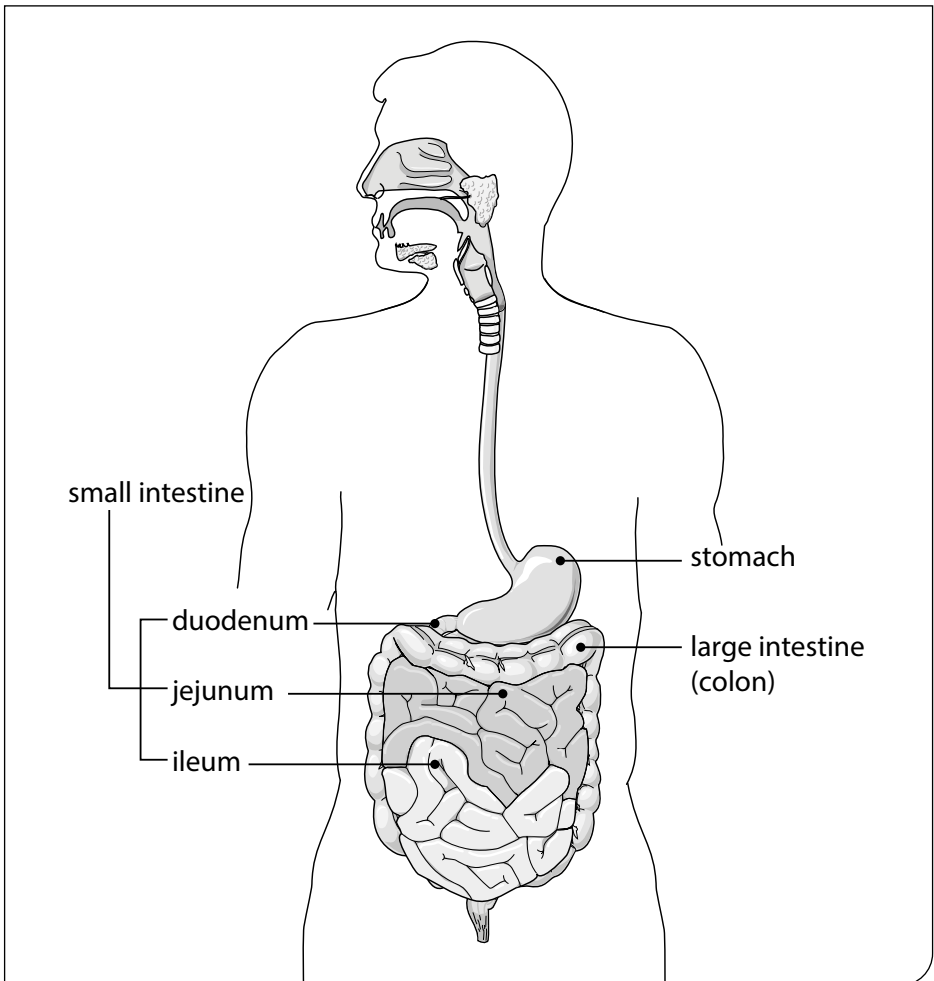


**Surgical Emergency Unit,
John Radcliffe Hospital**

This leaflet has been written to help guide you when you restart eating and drinking after your bowel surgery.

Nutrition is important for promoting healing and your recovery after your surgery. However, you may need to introduce food and fluids gradually until your bowel is fully functioning. The time taken at each stage will vary between people and will also depend on which bowel surgery you have had. Your Surgeon or Dietitian will monitor your recovery and advise you when to move to the next step.

Anatomy of the small intestine



Step 1: Clear fluids

Your Surgeon will tell you when you can start having fluids by mouth. At Step 1, your surgeon may tell you this can include:

- water
- black tea*
- black coffee*
- clear squash
- fruit juice (no bits)
- Juice-based Oral Nutritional Supplements.

*Sugar/sweetener can be added

Step 2: Free fluids

If there are no problems with 'Clear Fluids', your Surgeon may move you on to Step 2. This includes the liquids in Step 1, with the addition of:

- milkshakes
- malted milk drinks
- tea with milk
- coffee with milk
- hot chocolate
- milk
- Milk-based Oral Nutritional Supplements.

You should avoid fizzy drinks, as these can cause bloating and discomfort.

At Step 2, your Surgeon may also allow you to have smooth soups and cold, soft desserts.

Step 3: Introduction of solid food

If there are no problems with the fluids in Step 2, your Surgeon may move you on to Step 3. When you start eating again, you need to eat foods that your bowel can easily digest and absorb. These are, typically, lower fibre foods, such as the following:

	Foods to have	Foods to limit
Breakfast	<p>Rice Krispies or cornflakes with milk.</p> <p>Smooth Ready Brek.</p> <p>White bread or toast with butter/margarine and smooth spreads.</p> <p>Smooth fruit juice (maximum: 1 glass per day)</p> <p>Milk or milkshake.</p>	<p>Shredded Wheat, Branflakes, Weetabix, All Bran, Museli.</p> <p>Brown/wholemeal/wholegrain bread or toast,</p> <p>Dried fruit,</p> <p>Nuts and seeds.</p>
Lunch and evening meal	<p>Soup (no beans or pulses),</p> <p>Jacket potato (no skin) with cheese or tuna,</p> <p>Mashed potato or mashed carrot with swede with gravy,</p> <p>Eggs & omelette,</p> <p>Tender white and red meats and poultry,</p> <p>White bread sandwiches or white tortilla wraps with meat/fish/egg/cheese fillings,</p> <p>White pasta in a cheese or tomato sauce,</p> <p>White rice,</p> <p>Quorn,</p> <p>Shepherd's pie or fish pie,</p> <p>Stews (no beans or pulses),</p> <p>Fish in breadcrumbs or sauce,</p> <p>Well-cooked vegetables without skins/stalks/strings (e.g. carrots, broccoli florets, cauliflower florets, parsnips, swede, courgette).</p>	<p>Potato skins,</p> <p>Beans and pulses (e.g. chickpeas)</p> <p>Raw vegetables,</p> <p>Salads,</p> <p>Vegetables with tough skins/strings/stalks (e.g. green beans, mushrooms, sweetcorn, celery, asparagus).</p>

	Foods to have	Foods to limit
Snacks and puddings	Yoghurt, Custard, Jelly, Ice cream, Rice pudding, Mousse, Smooth hummus, Cheese with white crackers, Sponge cake (no dried fruit), Fresh or tinned fruit without skins/seeds (i.e. banana, peeled apple, peeled pear, mango, peel peaches).	Nuts and seeds, Dried fruit, Fruit cake, Popcorn, Cereal bars, Fresh or tinned fruit with tough skins/seeds (e.g. berries, pineapple, grapes, oranges).

Fluids:

- as in Step 2.

At this time, you may benefit from adopting a 'little and often' routine of eating. Aim for three small meals per day with two or three snacks, desserts or nourishing drinks in-between. Unless advised otherwise by your Surgeon or Dietitian, we encourage you to monitor your weight routinely, aiming for stability during this time.

Step 4: A balanced diet

If there are no problems from the solid food diet shown in Step 3, and unless otherwise advised by your Surgeon or Dietitian, it is recommended to return to a healthy balanced diet. Generally you can aim to do this within 2 to 6 weeks of your surgery. It is important to do this gradually to avoid any unpleasant symptoms such as bloating and diarrhoea.

Eatwell

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

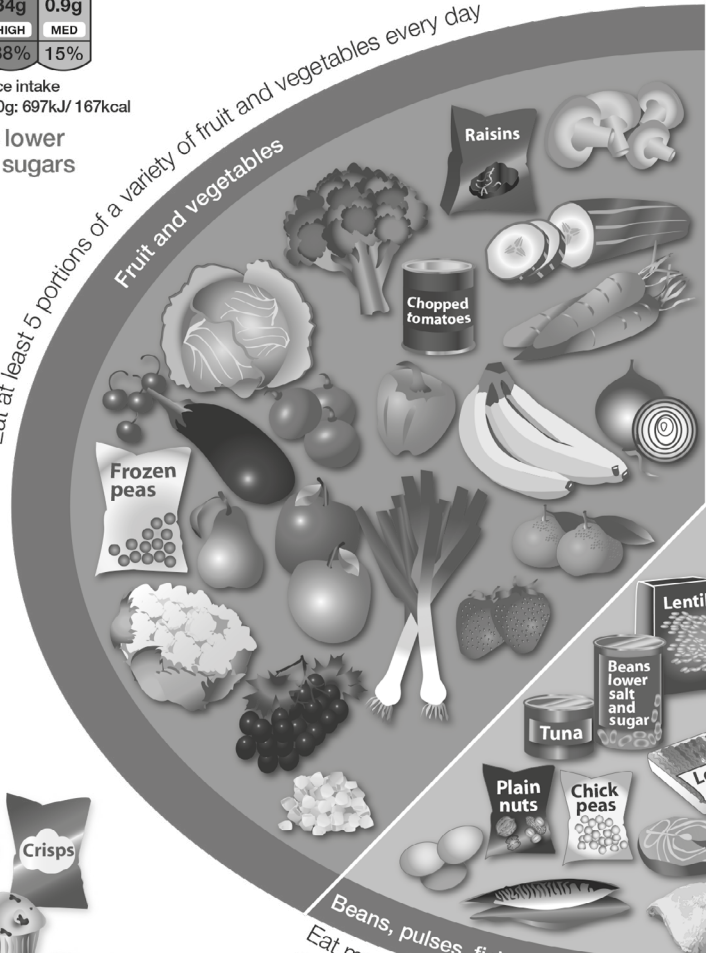
of an adult's reference intake

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balanced diet. It shows how much of what you eat overall should be...

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day



Eat less often and in small amounts

Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions of oily fish per week, one of which is oily red and processed meat

Guide

...ce of healthier and more sustainable food.
...ould come from each food group.

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates



6-8
a day

Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.
Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

er proteins
sustainably
t. Eat less

Dairy and alternatives
Choose lower fat and lower sugar options



Oil & spreads

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Food groups

Starchy carbohydrates

These starchy foods provide your body with energy and each meal should include them. They include:

- potatoes
- bread
- rice
- couscous
- quinoa
- crackers
- cereals, such as porridge oats and muesli.

Eat plenty of starchy carbohydrates. Choose wholegrain varieties and keep the skins on potatoes for more fibre, vitamins and minerals.

Fruit and vegetables

These provide important vitamins and minerals which help wounds to heal and protect the body from damage. They also contain fibre, which is important for gut health.

Aim to have at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. One portion is 80g (3oz) of fresh or tinned fruit or vegetables, or 30g (1oz) of dried fruit. All fresh, tinned, dried, frozen fruit and vegetables count towards your 5-a-day.

Dairy and alternatives

These provide calcium, which is essential for strong bones and teeth. They are also a good source of protein, which is needed for growth and repair.

They include:

- milk or milk alternatives
- yoghurt or yoghurt alternatives
- soft and hard cheese.

Make sure that you choose calcium fortified plant based alternatives if you do not consume dairy.

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

Protein is needed for growth, repair, and to maintain muscle strength (coupled with strengthening exercises). These foods are an excellent source of protein and are also an important source of iron, which is needed for carrying oxygen around the body. Examples of beans and pulses include butter or kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils.

Other foods containing protein include:

- nuts
- tofu or soya products
- meat substitutes (e.g. Quorn).

Your diet should include at least 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily (e.g. herring, pilchards, salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel).

Meat is a valuable source of nutrients and plays an important role in recovery and wound healing. However, you should limit red meat to no more than 3 portions per week and have very little, if any, processed meat (such as sausages, bacon, cured meats) to reflect the current recommendations from World Cancer Research Fund.

Oils and spreads

The fats in butter, oil and many spreads are an excellent energy source and provide essential vitamins (A, D, K and E). You should have them occasionally and in small amounts.

Foods to eat less often and in small amounts

These include food and drinks high in fat and sugar, such as cakes, chocolate, sweets, ice cream, crisps and cream. These foods are not needed in the diet, so should only be consumed occasionally and in small amounts.

Remember, good oral hygiene is also important, to prevent tooth decay.

Useful websites

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide

www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well

www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home

How to contact us

Your Dietitian:

Telephone:

(8.00am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Dietetic Department (John Radcliffe Hospital)

Telephone: 01865 221 702

(8.00am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Authors: Dietitians: Alice Gibson
January 2025
Review: January 2028
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

