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Eating and drinking before and after your pancreatic operation

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Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Information for Patients

Eating well at all times is important, especially when you are “building yourself up” for surgery and whilst recovering after surgery. Your body will need extra nourishment to meet your nutritional needs, keep your weight stable, or increase it and help you recover quicker following your surgery.

You may have lost weight and it could take a while before you begin to put weight back on. It can take 6 to 12 months after surgery for people to begin to gain weight and eat better.

This leaflet will provide you with some practical ways to support your nutritional intake.

Before your surgery

It is important to maintain your weight and fitness before surgery to optimise your recovery.

You may have a nutritional assessment with a Dietitian before your surgery. It is important that you tell your Consultant, GP or Specialist Nurse if you are struggling with your eating and drinking and/or have lost weight, so they can ask a Dietitian to help before your surgery.

After your pancreatic surgery

After your operation, you may not be allowed to eat or drink for two to three days in order to allow your intestinal tract and pancreas to heal. This will vary depending on your Surgeon and the type of surgery you have had. The doctors will assess this on a daily basis, introducing sips of fluids, then gradually progressing to a light diet (e.g soup, jelly, and ice-cream). Once you are managing this, you can gradually build up your intake of normal food.

Nutritional supplement drinks will be available for you when you are able to eat and drink. The Dietitian will make a recommendation on these to make sure you are getting enough calories and protein to help with wound healing, reduce the risks of infection and aid your overall recovery.

You are likely to feel full quickly, so it is encouraged to eat little and often to make sure you get the calories and protein your body needs to recover. Try to graze regularly on high calorie, high protein small meals and snacks. Your Dietitian can help you with this.

How can I build up my diet?

There are many ways to enhance your diet and minimise weight loss. How long you utilise this advice for will depend on your recover post-surgery and your overall nutritional status. Some ways to optimise your diet are to:

- Eat little and often
- Fortify your food (using everyday foods as a way of increasing the amount of calories that you eat.)
- Have nourishing drinks

Eating little and often

When you have a small appetite, one way of making sure you are getting enough calories and protein from your diet is to “graze” regularly, trying where possible to eat smaller more frequent meals and snacks throughout the day. You may prefer to use a smaller plate, such as a side plate to eat from, as a large plate of food may overwhelm you.

Below are some examples of snacks you can have between meals	
Sweet snacks	**Savoury snacks**
Full fat mousse	Crisps
Scone with butter and jam	Bread sticks/ cheese straws with hummus or dips
Muffins	Cheese & Crackers
Malt loaf	Nuts and seeds
Full fat rice pudding	Bagel with cream cheese
Halva	Bhajis
Fruit and full fat yoghurt	Spring rolls
Ice cream	Croissants
Brioche	Bombay mix
Custard or milk jelly	Scotch egg
Biscuits	Sausage roll
Cakes	Pork pie
Fun sized chocolate bars	Pakoras
Trifle	Samosa
Crème caramel	Crumpet or muffin with butter and/or cheese
Toast with peanut butter	Teacake and butter

Nourishing drinks

If you find that you manage liquids better, try having high calorie drinks between your meals as drinking these with meals may fill you up. Some ideas of nourishing drinks are as follows:

- Hot chocolate
- Nesquik®
- Horlicks®
- Ovaltine®
- Full fat milkshakes
- Yoghurt drinks
- Milky coffee
- Chai Latte / Masala Tea
- Glass of full cream milk or milk alternative (e.g oat, soya, lactose-free)

Fortified milk

You can make fortified milk by adding 2-4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to a pint (570mls) of full fat milk. You can keep it in the fridge and use it in drinks, on cereals and in your cooking.

Over the counter nutritional supplements

Some supplements are available over the counter from your chemist or some supermarkets. These can be mixed with fortified milk for extra calories and protein. Examples are:

- Complan®
- Meritene®
- Aymes Retail®
- Nurishment®

Some of these brands also do a soup variety if you prefer a savoury option.

Prescribable nutritional supplements

Sometimes even with these measures it may not be possible to gain weight or to keep your weight stable. Therefore the Dietitian, Consultant or Specialist Nurse may recommend the use of prescribable nutritional supplements before or after your surgery. There are many varieties available to try, including milk-based, juice-based, powdered, yoghurt-style and soups. You may need to try different products until you find the flavour and style you prefer. Your Dietitian will recommend how many you need to take to meet your nutritional needs.

Fortifying your food

One way to gain weight is to eat foods that are high in energy and protein. Fortifying your food refers to using everyday foods as a way of increasing the amount of calories that you eat. The table below shows how this can be done.

Ways to increase energy and protein in your diet

Milk	You can increase the protein in milk by adding 3-4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to one pint of full fat milk - this is called fortified milk. This can then be used in drinks, on cereals, puddings, soups or in sauces
Drinks	Fruit smoothies or milkshakes made with fresh or frozen fruit and natural yoghurt. Add honey*, syrup*, or ice cream.
Eggs	Omelettes, scrambled egg made with full cream milk Add butter and cheese
Mashed potato	Add double cream, crème fraiche, butter or margarine Use mashed potato to make potato cakes, you can add flaked fish, lentils etc.
Vegetables	Add butter or margarine, grated cheese or cream cheese and serve with a savoury sauce e.g. cauliflower cheese.
Toast	Be generous with butter/margarine, peanut butter, cream cheese, pâté Serve with beans, cheese or egg
Meat	Use creamy sauces in crumbles, pies and casseroles Add beans or pulses to casseroles
Fish	Serve with a creamy sauce Add mayonnaise to tinned tuna Choose fish in oil rather than brine Fry fish to add extra calories
Soups	Make with fortified milk and add extra butter, margarine, double cream or evaporated milk*. Choose ‘cream of’ varieties
Desserts	Use fortified milk to make custard or milk puddings Buy readymade puddings and add cream, jam*, sugar* or sweeteners Try scones, tea-cakes, crumpets or tea-bread with added butter, jam and clotted cream Have fruit pies, pastries or crumble (use sugar* or sweetener to taste) with cream, evaporated milk* or custard Full fat yoghurts or fromage frais Milk puddings - home-made, canned or in pots Fresh or tinned fruit in own juice with cream or ice cream

***If you have diabetes and are struggling to control your blood glucose levels, please use these foods sparingly.**

A sample meal plan

Breakfast	- Porridge made with **fortified milk** - Toast with extra butter / margarine, add extra peanut butter, jam or honey - Yoghurt with nuts, seeds and dried fruit - Fruit smoothie (made with fruit of your choice, fortified milk, fruit juice, icecream or yoghurt)
Mid-morning	- Coffee or tea with fortified milk - Choice of scone, crumpet or muffin with butter, jam
Lunch	- Jacket potato with cheese and beans - Macaroni cheese made with fortified milk, add extra cream - “Cream of” variety soup, bread and butter - Rice pudding / fruit and yoghurt or ice cream for dessert
Mid-afternoon	- Packet of crisps - Cheese and crackers - Milkshake made with whole milk - Hummus and vegetable sticks
Main meal	- Fish in creamy sauce, mashed potatoes and buttered vegetables - Lentil and chick pea curry with extra cream, with rice - Fruit crumble with full fat custard
Supper	- Toast with pâté, cheese and / or beans Biscuits with a milky drink using **fortified milk** - Bowl of cereal with **fortified milk**

You may experience other side effects as a result of your treatment that affect your overall nutrition. Some advice on how to manage these symptoms are listed below:

Taste changes

It is common to find that your favourite foods do not taste the same after surgery and this can take some time to return to normal.

- Try to stimulate your taste buds with sharp tasting foods and fluids such as cranberry, lemon or lime. Such flavours can potentially get rid of any unpleasant tastes in your mouth.
- If food tastes metallic, a gargle of lemon juice in water may help or use plastic cutlery.
- If foods tastes bland, try flavouring foods with herbs and spices, or use strong flavoured sauces e.g sweet and sour or a cheese sauce.

Nausea and vomiting

You may feel nauseous or start to vomit following your surgery. This is usually temporary and will improve with time. It is really important that your surgical team are informed as possible causes may need investigating. Your team can also prescribe anti-sickness medications to help.

- Eat small and frequent meals throughout the day.
- Sip on nutritious liquids between meals, for example milky drinks, smoothies, or nutritional supplements.
- Graze on high calorie snacks (see section ‘Eating little and often’ on page 2).
- Give your body time to digest the food, eat food slowly and sit upright after eating.
- Try and avoid cooking smells if possible; cold food and drinks usually have less smell
- Avoid greasy or fatty foods.

Blood glucose levels

It can be normal for your blood glucose levels to be higher after pancreatic surgery; this type of diabetes is called Type 3c Diabetes and might be managed differently compared to pre-surgery. If you check your blood glucose levels and notice these are higher than normal, please discuss this with your Diabetes Specialist Nurse.

If you do not check your blood glucose levels, and notice any of the following symptoms, please ask your doctor or nurse to check your blood glucose levels.

- Passing more urine than normal
- Feeling thirsty
- Dry mouth
- Blurred vision
- Feeling very tired
- Unexplained weight loss, despite eating well

It is important not to restrict your diet in order to control your blood glucose levels as your medication may need to be reviewed by your Diabetes team. If you are struggling to know what to eat to manage your diabetes, your Dietitian can give you further advice on this.

What else do I need to know?

One of the roles of the pancreas is to help you to digest your food. It produces important digestive enzymes that help you break down the food you eat, so that the nutrients can be absorbed in your

small intestine and used by the body. If your pancreas is not working as it should, it may not produce enough enzymes to help break down the food you eat. Without these important enzymes food will pass through your digestive system without being broken down or absorbed. This is known as malabsorption.

Pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy

We treat malabsorption by replacing the enzymes that your body is not producing effectively. You may need these before or after surgery depending on your condition. You may be prescribed one of the following medications; Creon®, Nutrizym®, Pancrex® or Crezanta®.

Your Dietitian, Specialist Nurse, or Consultant will be able to give you more information on pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy, including how, when and how many of the enzymes to take with your food and drink.

Monitoring your symptoms

It is important that you monitor the following symptoms, especially if you have been advised to follow the high calorie and high protein diet:

- Pale brown, orange or yellow-coloured stools
- Foul smelling stools
- Loose stools and/or urgent need to pass stools
- Oily or difficult to flush stools
- Bloating
- Wind and cramping
- Abdominal pain after eating

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please contact your Dietitian, Consultant or Specialist nurse to let them know.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your Dietitian on 0116 258 5400.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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