

# Gastric Sleeve Surgery: Returning Home

Having Gastric Sleeve surgery is life-changing, but it's only the first step in your weight loss journey. The success of your gastric sleeve is up to you.

Following your care team's discharge instructions as well as healthy eating, exercise, and lifestyle directions can help you through recovery and long after.

In the first few days after surgery, you may have belly cramping, nausea and pain at the incision site.

Tell your doctor if your pain is severe or does not get better with time.

Do not lift anything over 10 pounds during your recovery and as instructed by your doctor.

Within 2 days after surgery, you may shower.

Within 3 weeks: You can drive once you no longer need to take pain medicines.

And you may resume having sex.

Within 4 weeks: You may return to work depending on the type of work you do as directed by your doctor.

While you're recovering, get moving. But start easy. Try walking every day. Ask your care team what activities are best for you.

You'll have a special meal plan to help your belly heal.

Drink low-sugar liquids such as water, decaffeinated coffee and tea, for the first several weeks, next pureed foods such as applesauce, then soft foods like bananas and soft-boiled eggs, and eventually solid foods.

You'll also need to eat at least 60 grams of protein every day. Protein helps you feel fuller longer and prevents muscle loss.

Choose foods high in protein like chicken, tofu, low-fat yogurt, and protein shakes.

Your body won't be able to take in all the vitamins and nutrients it needs through food alone, so take a multivitamin every day.

Your doctor may ask you to take mineral supplements as well. Remember, your belly is much smaller now and can only hold a small amount of food.

So you'll need to eat smaller meals, eat slowly, chew your food well, don't eat and drink at the same time, and stop eating when you are satisfied, don't keep eating until you feel full.

You can stretch the stomach pouch if you do that.

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As you recover avoid: Sugary foods and drinks. They are empty calories and can cause nausea, diarrhea, and stomach cramping in some people.

Limit oils and fats. Too much fat can make you feel nauseous and slow your weight loss.

Don't drink alcohol. Your body can't handle it like before surgery.

And don't smoke. Smoking causes ulcers at the bottom of the stomach pouch.

Within the first 3 to 6 months after gastric sleeve surgery, you'll lose weight quickly. You may feel tired or cold sometimes.

You may also have body aches, dry skin, hair loss or thinning and mood changes. These changes should stop as your body adjusts to your weight loss.

Your care team can help you adjust to the changes.

Keep all your follow-up appointments and ask any questions you have.

Gastric sleeve is a lifelong commitment but if you stick to your meal plan, exercise and lifestyle changes you'll be successful.