



# Diet after LINX Esophageal Surgery

After surgery, the most important thing for you to do is to eat. Eating is like physical therapy for your LINX. It helps to exercise the device to prevent it from scarring into a fixed position.

Swallowing should be fairly easy the first 2 weeks after surgery. Food usually goes down well, and most people have little to no acid. Around weeks 3 to 8, you may have problems swallowing as scar tissue begins to form a capsule around the device. This is a good thing as the scar tissue helps to keep the device from sliding up and down.

## Working your device

Eating is important to keep your device from scarring into a fixed position. Every time you take a bite of food the device opens and closes. This stretches the scar tissue and helps you to heal.

- **Eat 5 to 7 small meals each day** instead of 3 large meals.
- **Eat slowly** and eat in a calm and relaxing place.
- **Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquid each day**, but limit your liquids to 4 ounces or ½ cup with meals and 8 ounces or 1 cup with snacks. Drink the rest of your liquids to between meals and snacks.
- **Eat sweet foods and desserts at the end of your meals** as these food make digestion occur more quickly.

## Avoid problems swallowing

- **Sit upright when eating and for at least 30 to 45 minutes after eating.**
- **Take small bites and chew all of your food well.**
- **Drink warm liquids, such as tea, before a meal** to help to relax the esophagus and help food go down easier.
- **Drink small sips of warm tea or other warm liquids to relax the esophagus if foods feel stuck.**
- **Limit dry bread products.** These foods can swell with your saliva or other liquids and could form a ball in your esophagus and cause blockage.



## Avoid gas and bloating

- **Avoid liquids that are either hot or very cold** as they can cause spasms and pain in the esophagus.
- **Avoid talking during meals, drinking from a straw or bottle, and do not chew gum or tobacco.** These can cause you to swallow air and create more gas in your stomach.
- **Limit or avoid foods that cause stomach gas or bloating.** These may include milk and other dairy products, sugar, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, onions, and beans or legumes.
- **Avoid carbonated beverages, including beer for at least 3 to 4 weeks.** After that, be sure to pour the carbonated drink into a cup or glass to allow some of the fizz or carbonation to escape.

## Your diet after surgery

Follow these diet guidelines to prevent problems after surgery.

### Day of Surgery: Soft Foods

- Eat a soft diet the day of your LINX placement to help you ease into eating solid foods. You may start your regular diet the day after your surgery.
- A soft food is anything that you can “squish” with your fingers, such as soft-cooked vegetables, slippery noodles and whitefish.
- Eat slowly. Take small bites and chew well.
- Avoid rice, bread, chicken and lettuce as these foods are harder to swallow.

### Weeks 1 to 2: Regular Food

During this time, many patients report food going down well and little to no acid. This is true if a hiatal hernia repair is not done.

We suggest that you:

- Take small bites of food.
- Chew food well.
- Eat often, such as 5 to 7 meals a day or a small snack every 1 to 2 hours.
- Limit the amount of dry food you eat, such as chips, hard bread and crackers.

### Weeks 3 to 8: Problems Swallowing

- Scar tissue will be forming at this time. This is a sign that your body is healing. Scar tissue forms a capsule around the device, preventing it from sliding up and down.
- You may have these signs:
  - › Problems swallowing, called dysphagia
  - › Increased belching
  - › Chest pain. Sometimes spasms of the esophagus cause chest pain. Your esophagus is a muscle. Like any muscle in the body, it may spasm from surgery. This pain may feel sharp or stabbing, but it does not last long.

These signs are normal. Eat often to ease them.

- If food sticks or you have problems swallowing, drink warm tea or other warm liquids to help relax the esophagus.

- To prevent the device from scarring into a fixed position, eat 5 to 7 small meals a day or a small snack every 1 to 2 hours. Eating is physical therapy or exercise for the device. Every time you swallow a bite of food, the device opens and closes. This movement stretches the scar tissue, helping the device to stay mobile. It also prevents long-term problems with swallowing and helps with healing.
- If you do not eat solid foods, you may need a procedure called dilation. **This is rare and preventable if you follow the diet guidelines in this sheet.**
- Limit caffeine, such as regular tea or coffee.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid carbonated beverages until at least 3 weeks after surgery. After that, pour into glass to allow carbonation to escape.
- Drink warm liquids, such as tea, before meals to relax the muscles around the device. This helps food go down.
- Experiment with your food to find the amount and type of foods that work best for you.

## General rules to follow

- Sit upright (90-degree angle) when eating or drinking.
- Take small bites: only ½ to 1 teaspoon at a time at first.
- Eat slowly. It may also help to eat only one food at a time.
- Avoid talking while eating.
- Do not mix solid foods and liquids in the same mouthful, and do not wash down foods with liquids unless you have been instructed to do so by your surgeon. If you do feel that your food is sticky, a small amount of warm liquid may help. However, avoid drinking too much or you may feel uncomfortable.
- Eat in a relaxed atmosphere that has no distractions.
- Sit upright (90-degree angle) for 30 to 45 minutes after eating.
- Avoid carbonated (bubbly) drinks as they will make you feel bloated.
- If food does tick, don't panic. Try to relax and let the food pass on its own. Sipping, hot tea or warm broth can also help.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, go to [patienteducation.osumc.edu](http://patienteducation.osumc.edu) or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).