



Prehabilitation: Eating Well Before and After Surgery



Liverpool University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Nutrition and Dietetics

Aintree Site

Lower Lane, L9 7AL Tel: 0151-525-5980

Royal Site

Prescot Street, L7 8XP

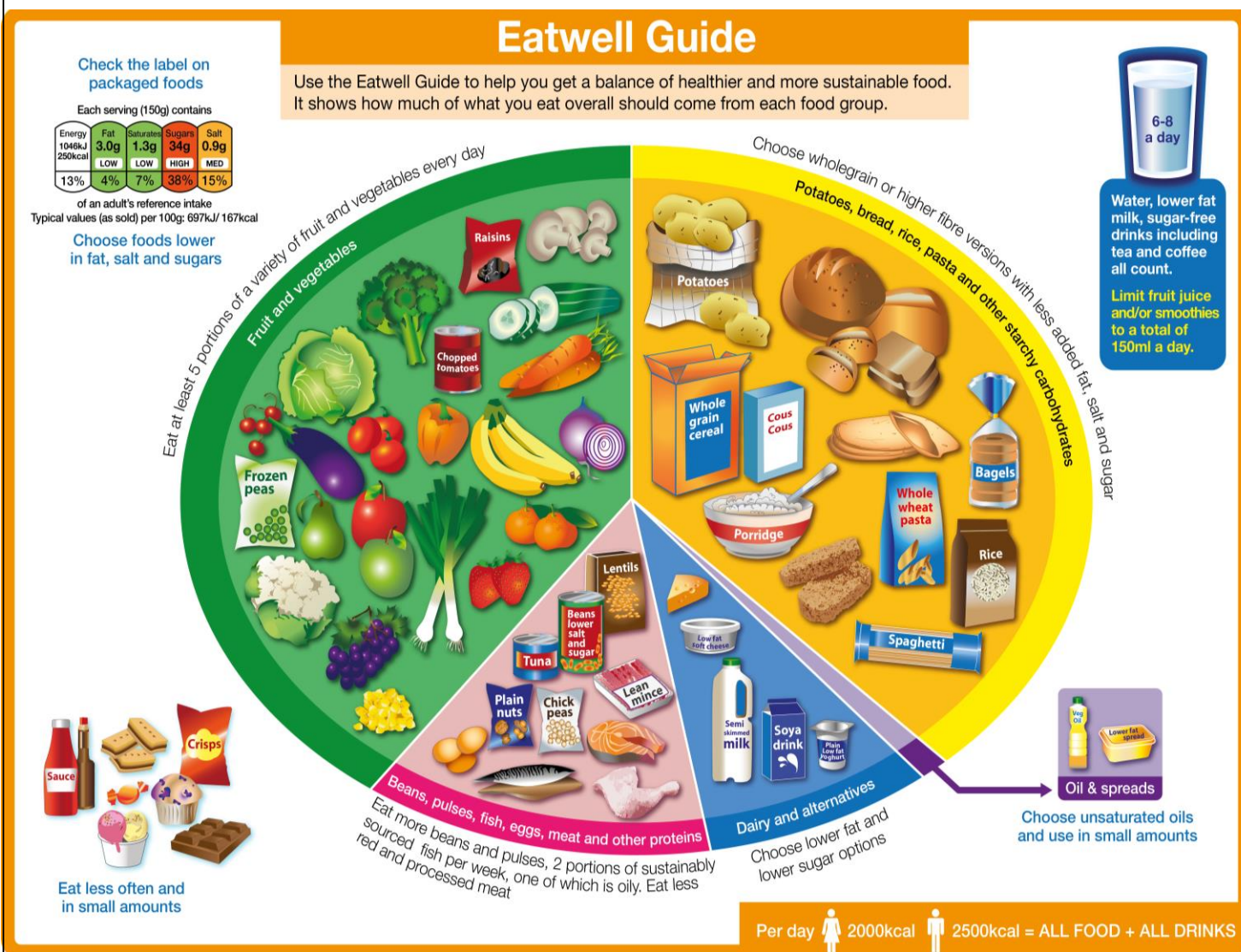
Broadgreen Site

Thomas Drive, L14 3LB

Royal & Broadgreen Tel: 0151-706-2000

You may be thinking about what foods you should eat before and after surgery, or how to improve your diet to focus on your long-term health. This leaflet will give an overview of the recommendations you should follow before and after surgery and is applicable to most people. However, if you are struggling to eat enough, are unintentionally losing weight, or have symptoms affecting your ability to eat normally then you should speak to the Prehab Dietitian.

You should aim to eat a variety of foods, using the Eatwell Guide to help plan your daily meals:



Preparing for Surgery

1. Eat regular meals to fuel your body. Make sure you have had a meal containing carbohydrates (yellow section of the EatWell Guide) at least 90 minutes before doing any exercise.
2. Include protein foods at each meal – breakfast, lunch and evening meal. Good sources of protein include:

Red meat, e.g. beef, pork, lamb. (90g or the size of a deck of cards per serving)	These are also good sources of iron. Aim to eat these no more than 2-3 times a week and try to limit processed meats such as bacon, packet sandwich meat, burgers, sausages and cured meats.
Poultry, e.g. chicken, turkey. (90g or the size of a deck of cards per serving).	These are lower in fat than red meats.
Meat alternatives, e.g. tofu, soya, tempeh, seitan, mycoprotein or Quorn™ products. (100g or 4 tablespoons per serving).	These are useful if you follow a vegetarian diet.
Fish. (140g or the size of the palm of your hand per serving), or small can (100g drained)	Try to eat fish twice a week, with one of these being an oily fish e.g. salmon, mackerel, trout, sardines, kippers.
Eggs. (2-3 eggs per serving).	These are a good high protein breakfast or snack option.
Pulses e.g. beans (including baked beans), lentils, peas, hummus. (150g or 4 tablespoons per serving).	These are high in fibre and are good sources of iron.
Nuts, seeds (a small handful) Nut butters and tahini (30g or 1 tablespoon per serving)	These are a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals. They are high in calories; therefore, portion size should be kept to the recommendation unless your goal is to gain weight.
Cows' milk and soya milk, milkshakes (1/3 of a pint/200ml/1 glass) Milk powder	Be aware that nut milks (e.g. almond milk, coconut milk) are generally low in protein and can lack other essential vitamins, therefore, should not be relied upon for protein.
Yoghurt (125g pot/3 tablespoons per serving).	Choose Greek-style yoghurts for the highest protein content.
Cheese (30g/the size of a matchbox per serving) and cottage cheese (half a 300g pot).	Cheese can be added to meals to boost their protein intake, e.g. grate over eggs, beans, potatoes or stir into sauces. Choose low fat varieties to avoid gaining weight.
Miscellaneous	Quinoa, oats, amaranth, spelt, wild rice, milky puddings (e.g. rice pudding, custard made with milk).

3. Have a snack after exercising if it isn't time for your next meal. This should include a protein food. Some high protein snack ideas are:
 - Hard boiled eggs
 - A Greek-style yoghurt
 - A glass of milk or milkshake
 - A handful of nuts, seeds and dried fruit
 - Hummus or cottage cheese on crackers/toast/rice cakes/oat cakes
 - Tinned tuna or salmon on a sandwich/cracker breads/pita bread
 - A fruit smoothie made with milk and yoghurt

4. Have a range of fruits and vegetables, aiming for 5 portions a day. Try to choose fruits and vegetables of different colours. Dark green vegetables and pulses are also good iron sources.
5. Don't cut out any food groups or follow 'restrictive' diets which claim to have health benefits.
6. Don't take vitamin or mineral supplements unless you are told to do so.

After Surgery – Eating Well on the Ward

1. Try to eat regularly, even if this is only small amounts. Snacks can be requested e.g. biscuits, yoghurts, crackers and cheese, to top up your nutrition between meals and after exercise. (Exercise would include walking with the therapists or by yourself on the ward or climbing the stairs).
2. Be aware of which foods contain protein (as above) and order these from the menu.
3. Ask for glasses of milk from the drinks trolley for extra protein and calories. It's also a good idea to have these after doing some exercise.
4. Don't fill up on low calorie foods like soup, jelly and ice cream. It would be better to have the main meals, eating the protein and carbohydrate foods first. Select hot puddings when available.
5. Take nutritional supplement drinks twice a day every day. These will either be given to by the nursing staff, or you can request them from the nursing staff. These are milkshake drinks that contain a wide variety of nutrients to support your healing. You could take these as your post-exercise snack.
6. Only follow a restricted diet if you have been told to do so.
7. Always alert the medical team or nursing staff if you have any symptoms putting you off your eating, e.g. nausea/vomiting/bowel problems, as it is better to have these dealt with quickly than to go without eating.

After Surgery – Eating Well At Home

1. Continue to follow the guidance in the Eatwell Guide, basing your meals around carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables. Eat a variety of foods from each food group.
2. Have a moderate protein intake. Once you have healed you can reduce your protein intake back down to what you would have normally had, though bear in mind if you are aged over 65, are very active or have lost muscle strength your daily protein needs will be higher for longer.
3. If you have been told to follow a specific diet you should have follow-up to review how long to continue the diet for and how to reintroduce foods as appropriate.
4. Keep to a healthy weight. Being too underweight or overweight can affect your long-term health. If you would like advice regarding your weight you can call the Prehab Dietitian.
5. Limit your alcohol intake to less than 14 units per week.

Contact Details

Prehab Team and Prehab Dietitian
0151 529 2730

Aintree Dietitians office (including Prehab Dietitian alternative number)
0151 529 3473.

Email

Prehabilitation@liverpoolft.nhs.uk. This email account is checked daily.

More useful information about eating well:

For information on a healthy diet

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-eating.html>

For information on healthy weight loss if you are overweight:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/weight-loss.html>

For information on gaining weight if you are underweight:

<https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers>

For information on alcohol consumption

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/alcohol-facts.html>

For information on cancer prevention: World Cancer Research Fund 10 top tips

<https://www.wcrf-uk.org/uk/preventing-cancer/cancer-prevention-recommendations>



If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact:

Tel No: 0151 529 2906

Email: interpretationandtranslation@liverpoolft.nhs.uk