



Dietary advice following an intragastric balloon

This leaflet is for patients who have had a procedure to insert an intragastric balloon for weight loss. The advice aims to maximise your success following the procedure and includes information on:

- What the procedure is
 - Reintroducing food after the balloon is inserted
 - Dietary advice for success following the balloon insertion
 - Troubleshooting tips.
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Diet and your intragastric balloon

Having an intragastric balloon placed does not guarantee weight loss. This procedure is a tool that you should work with to maximise and maintain your weight loss. This means you will still need to make changes to your diet and lifestyle. After the balloon is removed (after 6 months), you need to continue with the changes you have made to avoid weight regain.

Red flag symptom

- **Blue/green coloured urine or stools:** A blue dye is normally added to the saline (salt water) that is injected into your balloon. In the rare event that the balloon leaks, you would know by the change in colour of your urine or stools (poo) to a blue/green colour. If this does happen, please contact the nurse specialist immediately or if it is out of working hours, go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

What is the intragastric balloon?

- The intragastric balloon is a silicon balloon about the size of a large grapefruit, which is filled with saline. It sits in the top of the stomach and helps to limit the amount of food you can eat by making you feel full.
- It is inserted by an endoscopic procedure performed in theatre under sedation or light general anaesthetic, normally as a day case procedure. This means no incisions (cuts) are needed. The balloon is passed through your mouth and down into your stomach using an endoscope (a thin, flexible tube that has a light and a camera on one end).
- The balloon needs to be removed after 6 months.
- Some people do not tolerate the balloon very well and may need to have it removed early, but most people cope with the balloon well and will lose between 20-30% of their excess weight over the 6-month period.

Before balloon insertion

- Do not have anything to eat or drink for 12 hours before your appointment. Plain water can be drunk up to 2 hours before your appointment.
- **Please note:** If you are taking medication for diabetes, you may need to adjust your doses during this 12-hour period. Please check with your diabetes nurse, consultant or GP.

Reintroducing food following the balloon insertion

Following your balloon insertion, it usually takes 1-2 weeks to return to a regular texture diet. It is important to assess how you feel at each stage and not to rush if you feel uncomfortable. It may take you slightly longer to progress through each stage and this is not a concern, unless you are not progressing at all.

Your diet will progress from fluids to soft foods, through to regular texture foods in 4 stages:

- Stage 1: **Fluids**
- Stage 2: **Pureed diet**
- Stage 3: **Soft / mashable**
- Stage 4: **Regular texture**

Days 1 -7 – Stage 1: Fluids only

You should have a fluid only diet, no solid foods should be eaten. Try to have less than 1000 calories a day. Make sure you drinking plenty of fluids – up to 2 litres a day – while ensuring you sip your fluids slowly to avoid swallowing additional air. It is important that you get a variety of liquids at this stage, including liquid sources of protein.

- **Include:** Thin soups, fruit juices diluted with water, meal replacement shakes, milk (plus water and sugar-free squash as usual).
- **Avoid:** Excessive caffeine, fizzy drinks, high calorie / high sugar drinks.

Day 8-10 – Stage 2: Pureed diet

Once you are tolerating fluids well, you can start introducing pureed foods into your diet. You will need a blender, liquidizer or food processor to make your own pureed foods. A pureed diet should be a smooth consistency with no chunks, like a yogurt. Make sure you include protein at every meal. Don't worry if you are only able to eat small amounts, and remember to stop eating if you feel discomfort or pressure.

- **Include:** Thicker creamy soups, smooth yogurts, cereals such as Ready Brek or Weetabix with lots of milk, blended meats or fish with gravy or other sauces, blended fruits, softly cooked and blended vegetables, smooth mashed potato
- **Avoid:** 'Chunky' soups with bits, hard foods that are hard to blend, blending too many different foods together, high calorie foods including high sugar and fat.
- **Continue to avoid** excessive caffeine, fizzy drinks and high calorie / high sugar drinks.

Day 11-14 – Stage 3: Soft diet

You can now start eating a soft diet – foods that can be easily mashed with a fork. At this stage you no longer need to blend your foods. Aim to create balanced meals and a regular meal pattern.

- **Include:** Thick soups, soft fruits and vegetables, soft omelette / scrambled egg, cottage cheese, canned tuna, soft pasta in sauce, tender meat / minced meat / fish / Quorn or other soya alternatives, slow cooked casseroles / stews / curries.
- **Avoid:** Tough textured meats, crunchy or hard textured foods, foods that require a lot of chewing, i.e. breads, high-calorie foods including high sugar and fat.
- **Continue to avoid:** Excessive caffeine, fizzy drinks and high calorie / high sugar drinks.

Day 15 onwards – Stage 4: Regular texture diet

Your regular diet should consist of a regular eating pattern of healthy and nutritious foods. You should not focus on only eating small amounts to lose weight. It is very important that the food you eat is of high nutritional value and you are getting enough protein and fibre in your diet.

General advice:

- You may find it easier to start with crispy / crumbly foods that break down in water such as crisp breads, crackers and bread sticks. You should then introduce varied textured foods.
- Ensure you are following the '**20-20-20**' approach; have mouthful pieces the size of a 20 pence piece, chew your food 20 times and review your hunger if you are still eating after 20 minutes.
- Aim to have 3 meals a day, limit snacking to only when you are genuinely hungry.
- Continue to avoid excessive caffeine, fizzy drinks and high calorie foods and drinks.
- Take a daily A-Z vitamin and mineral supplement to ensure all your vitamin and mineral requirements are met. The length of time you should take this depends on the quality of your diet and you can discuss this with your dietitian.

Healthy eating

There are five main food groups; a healthy diet includes a mix of them all. You should try to limit sugary foods as these typically increase your calories without increasing your nutrients.

1. Protein foods:

- Such as meat, fish, eggs, dairy, beans and meat alternatives
- Include 2 to 3 portions per day (a portion is 60-90g / 2-3oz)
- You must be particularly careful to chew well when eating meat, fish and nuts
- Base your meals on mostly protein and eat the protein part of your meal first

2. Milk and dairy:

- Choose low-fat cheese
- Choose skimmed milk and low fat yogurt varieties
- Dairy products can also be used as a protein source in your meal

3. Fruit and vegetables:

- Aim to have 4-5 portions per day
- A small glassful of unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice is one portion per day
- Having fruit or vegetables with each meal can also help manage post-surgery constipation
- Having fruit as a snack can help you feel fuller for longer

4. Carbohydrates:

- Such as bread, potatoes, rice, cornmeal and cereals
- One small portion around (50g – 60g / 2oz) at each meal will be sufficient
- There is no need to cut out carbohydrates from your diet

5. Fatty foods:

- Use a small amount of vegetable oil for cooking
- Use low fat margarine as spread

Sugary foods:

- Replace sugary desserts with a diet yoghurt or stewed fruit
- Beware of the soft, calorie dense foods such as chocolate, sweets or ice cream as they will pass through your stomach quicker and not make you feel satisfied after eating.
- These are also called 'slider foods' and can cause weight gain / limit your weight loss

Steps to success

- **Limit portion sizes;** for meals use a side plate or serve about half of a regular portion. Measuring your food portions can help initially. It will take time to get used to what your smaller portion looks like.
- **Stop eating as soon as you are no longer hungry;** do not push yourself to feeling full, you are aiming to feel satisfied after eating. Over-eating can limit your weight loss. When you have eaten enough, do not return to finish the rest of your meal.
- **Eat slowly;** it should take 20 minutes to finish your meal. This will allow time for your band to tell your brain that you are satisfied and do not need to eat more. Allow a minute between each mouthful that you swallow, placing your knife and fork down between mouthfuls can help achieve this.
- **Chew foods thoroughly;** you should chew each mouthful 20 times before swallowing. Aiming for a smooth texture in the mouth. Each mouthful should be the size of a 20p coin, or smaller if you are struggling.
- **Eat 3 small meals per day;** your meals should be mostly protein based; 50% protein, 25% carbohydrate and 25% vegetables. Eat the protein part of your meal first followed by the vegetables and carbohydrates.
- **Eat nutritious, solid foods;** that contain good fibre and protein to help you feel satisfied after eating. Soft foods that are high in fat and / or sugar are known as 'slider foods', these do not make you feel satisfied and can result in weight regain.
- **Do not drink while eating;** do not drink 30 minutes before or 30 minutes after your meal. Drinking before your meal will cause you to feel full before you have had adequate nutrition. Drinking after your meal will 'flush' the food through your pouch and band causing you to feel hungry shortly afterwards.
- **Limit snacking between meals;** it is a common cause of reduced weight loss or weight regain. If you are hungry between meals, try to assess if it is genuine hunger or if it is thirst, or emotional hunger.
- **Choose zero calorie drinks;** drinks can easily increase your calorie intake and cause weight regain as they do not make you feel satisfied. You should avoid sugary juice, sugary squashes, milkshakes and fizzy drinks. Women need calcium and this can be obtained from low fat dairy in the diet. Alcohol will also increase your calories and likely cause an increase in appetite.
- **Physical activity;** Increasing physical activity / exercise is beneficial for achieving and maintaining weight loss. A mix of both cardio and weight bearing exercises is the most effective. Make sure that the physical activity you do is within your own safe limits according to your individual abilities.

Fluids

- Aim for 8-10 glasses (2 litres) of fluid a day.
- Choose non-carbonated fluids. Avoid fizzy drinks, even if they are sugar-free. The gas produced by these can expand your sleeve / pouch and make you uncomfortable.
- Avoid using a straw to drink, as this can cause you to swallow more air or drink too much / too quickly at once.
- The best drink for you to choose is water as it is most hydrating while being naturally sugar- and calorie-free.
- You can also have diluted sugar-free squash, sugar-free flavoured still waters, coffee or tea, herbal teas, clear soups, and diluted unsweetened fruit juice.
- Read the labels of your drinks. Some drinks are marketed as healthy but contain a lot of sugar and / or calories.
- Do not forget that alcoholic drinks can be high in calories and increase your appetite, so moderate your intake.

Troubleshooting

- **Regurgitation:** It is likely that your food portion sizes are too big and you will need to decrease the amount you eat at a mealtime. It could also be a sign that you are not drinking enough fluids. Remember to drink regularly throughout the day, but avoid eating and drinking at the same time.
- **Wind:** Usually caused by eating too fast or using straws for drinks.
- **Nausea:** Can be common for the first few days as your stomach adjusts to the balloon. It is likely you will feel uncomfortable and may experience nausea, bloating, diarrhoea and cramping. These side effects are temporary and normal and if necessary, your clinician can prescribe medication to manage this. However, if these symptoms last for more than a few days, or if you are experiencing persistent vomiting, contact your nurse immediately. Longer term, nausea can be made worse by eating fatty foods.
- **Heaving feeling:** Usually caused by not drinking enough fluids.
- **Halitosis (bad breath):** Usually caused by food sticking to the balloon. Rinse the balloon by drinking some water. It is usually recommended to avoid fizzy drinks, but on this occasion, sparkling water may be helpful.

Diet prior to balloon removal (usually after 6 months)

- Your stomach needs to be completely empty to make your balloon removal safe.
- One week before removal, return to the soft / semi-solid diet (stage 3 diet).
- The day before your balloon removal, move to liquids only.
- Have nothing to eat or drink for 12 hours before the removal appointment. Plain water can be drunk up to 2 hours before your appointment.

Contacting us

If you have any questions, please contact your dietitian or nurse:

- Bariatric Dietitian (Monday-Friday 8am-4pm), Tel@ 0118 322 7116 or email: rbb-tr.dietitians@nhs.net
- Kath Hallworth-Cook (Clinical Nurse Specialist), Tel: 0118 322 8811 / 01344 662941 or email: katharine.hallworth-cook@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

If you have other significant medical concerns outside of the team's working hours, or require immediate help, you should seek urgent medical advice and explain that you have had a recent intragastric balloon placed.

Useful websites

Weight Loss Surgery Information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/weight-loss-surgery/

NHS Better Health: www.nhs.uk/better-health/

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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