



**Paul S. Collins, MD**

*General Surgery  
Vascular Surgery*

**Kevin L. Huguet, MD**

*General Surgery  
Laparoscopic Surgery*

**Brett A. Almond, MD**

*Vascular Surgery  
Endovascular Surgery*

**Jamii B. St. Julien, MD**

*General Surgery  
Advanced GI Minimally Invasive Surgery*

**Jinny L. Gunn, MD**

*General Surgery  
Breast Surgery*

**Chun Kevin Yang, MD**

*Vascular Surgery  
Endovascular Surgery*

### **Diet after Esophageal/Gastric Surgery**

After surgery, normal post-operative swelling will prevent you from eating a regular diet. This may also cause you to swallow more air when you eat. ***Your diet will be advanced over 4 to 5 weeks, and at that point you will be able to eat most of the items in your regular diet.*** Careful adherence to this diet will minimize post-operative pain and maximize the likelihood of long term success after your operation.

\*Your diet will progress slowly in stages, from just liquids to a normal diet. After surgery you will have:

- 1 week of full liquids
- 1 week of pureed foods
- 1 week of a soft diet
- 1 week of small regular food with finely chopped pieces and no bulky items
- You may then advance your diet as you tolerate. Be patient!

\*You will start on a clear liquid diet while in the hospital. Clear liquids include: water, lemonade, apple, grape, or cranberry juice, Crystal-Lite, Kool-Aid, broth, popsicles, Jell-O, decaffeinated tea and decaffeinated coffee (without cream).

\* You will need to either crush your medications, or take chewable or liquid medications as prescribed. Long-acting medications cannot be crushed, so you will need to either find a short-acting or liquid alternative (ask your prescribing doctor).

\*Sit upright when eating or drinking. Remain in an upright position for 30 minutes after eating. Do not recline.

\*Avoid gulping. Swallowing air will often lead to bloating and discomfort. Avoid drinking through a straw, don't chew gum or tobacco. Avoid carbonated beverages. Avoid smoking, caffeine, alcohol, citrus and tomato products.

\*Walking multiple times daily will improve digestion of food and help alleviate gas, prevent blood clots, and promote healing.

960 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33705  
(727) 821-8101 Phone  
(727) 825-1357 Fax

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St. Petersburg, FL 33705  
(727) 821-8101 Phone  
(727) 825-1357 Fax

\*As you progress through these stages, if discomfort occurs, go back to the previous stage for a few days.\*

**Week 1: Full Liquids** Regular milk, milkshakes, ice cream, custards, pudding, thin cream of wheat, thin cream of rice, strained creamed soups, flavored fruit drinks, fruit juice without pulp or seeds, vegetable juice, smooth yogurt (no fruit pieces or chunks). You can get extra calories and protein from high protein liquid supplements available in many health food stores: Ensure, Boost.

**Week 2: Pureed Foods** Anything that can be poured from a blender: warm cereals, cream of wheat, cooked oatmeal, pureed pasta, pureed or mashed vegetables, baby food, “runny” mashed potatoes, pureed fruit, smooth applesauce, cottage cheese, sherbet, pureed soups.

**Week 3: Soft Food** Anything that can be scooped rather than poured: Cold cereals that soften with milk, crackers that soften with liquid, cooked and finely chopped pasta, moist rice, soft cooked and finely chopped vegetables, soft canned fruits, soft peeled ripe fruit (bananas), skinless baked potatoes, soft fish without bones, scrambled eggs, shredded soft cheeses.

**Week 4: Regular Small meals with no large chunks** You may resume a regular diet, but with no large bulky meats or large pieces of dry bread. You must chop your food into small pieces, and chew it well. Continue to avoid very bulky ruffage and very dry foods during this week. At this point you may start taking small medication pills again, but only those smaller than the food chunks you are limited to.

**Week 5 and beyond: Regular diet** Resume your regular diet as tolerated. It is still a good idea to eat small frequent meals (5-6 per day) rather than just 2-3 large meals per day. Eat only until you feel full. Drink plenty of fluids in-between meals, but limit fluids to 1/2 cup with meals to avoid stretching your stomach. You may take your usual medication pills, but you may not be able to take very large pills – every person is different.

Please call our office if you have any questions