



University Hospitals Bristol
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Nutrition and dietetics

Diet after jaw surgery



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How jaw surgery impacts diet

After jaw surgery, it may take a while to be able to eat and drink normally again; this is to let the bones heal. At first, you may have to use a small plastic syringe, a small spoon or straw to eat and drink. This is because of any facial swelling you may have. You will need to drink plenty of nourishing fluids, for example soups, milk, and smoothies.

Your jaw may be held together with elastics. After a few days, these may be loosened, or you may be advised by your orthodontist that they can be taken off during mealtimes. You will need to eat a soft diet which needs very little chewing for at least six weeks after the surgery.

This diet sheet goes through meal ideas for a liquid, purée, blended and soft diet. It includes high energy snacks and drinks, which can be very useful when eating is hard and painful and you are unable to open your mouth normally. You should return to your normal diet when your appetite is better and you are able to eat normal amounts at mealtimes. You are unlikely to need to continue to have 'nourishing fluids' and 'nourishing snacks' when you are eating a good amount at mealtimes, as these can be unhealthy if eaten regularly long term.

It is common to lose some weight. People usually regain this weight easily; however, if this is a concern for you, please speak to your orthodontist at your next visit.

Liquid diet

In the first few days after your surgery, you may find it difficult to chew or move food around your mouth. During this time, liquids may be easier to take.

Hydration

It is important to drink plenty of fluids – aim for eight cups of fluid per day.

It may be difficult to drink large quantities of fluid at a time; having small amounts more frequently can ensure you maintain good hydration.

Avoid having very hot drinks – wait for them to cool before drinking.

Nutrition

If you are on a liquid diet, it is important that the fluids you consume are nourishing to maintain your nutritional intake. Try to have two to three nourishing drinks or smooth soups at breakfast, lunch and dinner, or spread them out throughout the day, aiming for six to eight per day, 1,800 to 2,500 calories per day.

Try to drink a vitamin C rich drink daily, for example orange juice or fortified squash.

If you are on a liquid diet for more than a week, you may require a multivitamin and mineral. Choose one that comes in a liquid or that can be dissolved in water, such as an effervescent one.

See the information about nourishing drinks on page 5 for ideas.

Nourishing drinks

Fortified milk (make up one to two pints per day. One pint provides approximately 600 calories.)

Make fortified milk by adding four to five heaped tablespoons of milk powder to one pint of full cream milk. Use this to make milkshakes and warm milky drinks, such as coffee, hot chocolate, and malted drinks.

Milkshakes

You can:

- blend fruit (for example banana and tinned fruit) with fortified milk to make a smoothie
- use milkshake powder or syrup with fortified milk to make a milkshake
- add cream, ice cream, honey, chocolate spread or smooth peanut butter for extra energy
- buy ready made milkshakes, yoghurt based smoothies and yoghurt drinks.

Soups

Try tins of creamed soups, instant soups made up with milk, or smooth, condensed soups diluted with milk.

Using a blender, try puréeing homemade soups with some cooked meat to improve the flavour and add extra nourishment.

Fruit juice, squash and cordials

Try to choose sugar-free squash and cordials, and limit pure fruit juice to one glass per day.

Yoghurt

Use drinking yoghurts or smooth full fat yoghurt, and dilute with milk if it is too thick.

Supplement drinks

Supplement drinks such as Meritene and Complan are available as milkshakes and soups from most chemists and supermarkets. These are fortified with extra protein and vitamins and minerals.

Other supplements can be available on prescription – speak with your doctor

Puréed meals

If you find eating difficult in the first few days or week after the surgery, you may find it useful to purée meals to a smooth consistency with a hand blender or food processor. You may need to add sauces, gravies or liquids to make a thinner consistency. It can be helpful to prepare and freeze some meals, soups and smoothies in advance of the surgery.

If you need to purée foods, consider serving them separately on the plate so they retain their individual tastes and colours.

The following foods do not purée easily, so try to avoid:

- stringy foods such as green beans and celery
- crunchy food, for example nuts, muesli, crisps and toast
- skins, seeds and husks, for example sausages, peas, sweetcorn, seeded and granary varieties of bread, beans
- chewy foods such as tough meat and toffees.

Meal ideas

Breakfasts or light meals

- wheat biscuits with full cream milk
- porridge or instant oats made with full cream milk
- smooth full cream yoghurt or fromage frais – try with mashed banana or fruit purée
- scrambled egg with grated cheese.

Main meals

- thick smooth soups, such as cream of lentil, vegetable, chicken or tomato
- finely minced or puréed meat and fish with a gravy or sauce, for example puréed cottage pie, fish and parsley sauce, beef casserole, curry, cauliflower cheese
- puréed pasta or rice with a sauce, for example tomato or cheese sauce
- you can serve these meals with mashed potato (add butter and cream) or smooth lentils.

Desserts

- smooth milk puddings such as rice pudding, semolina, custard
- puréed, stewed or tinned fruit with custard, cream or evaporated milk
- smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, instant whip and mousses
- blancmange, fruit fools, crème caramel, milk jelly, jelly, ice cream and sorbet.

Soft diet

When eating is more comfortable, and you are able to open and close your mouth more freely, you can start to have some softer foods. Start with foods that can be mashed with a fork. Foods can be minced or chopped to suit your needs. The addition of sauces and gravies can help moisten food, making it easier to swallow. Continue to avoid or remove seeds, pips and tough skins.

Meal ideas

Breakfast

- cereal soaked in milk, for example wheat biscuits, puffed rice or corn-based cereals
- porridge made with full fat milk
- mashed banana or tinned fruit with full fat yoghurt
- scrambled, boiled or poached egg with soft bread (you may need to cut the crusts off if they are chewy).

Light meals

- soft sandwich (avoid granary/seeded bread) with a soft filling, for example soft cheese, pâté, egg mayonnaise, tuna mayonnaise or houmous
- soup (add cream or grated cheese) and bread and butter
- the inside of a jacket potato with tinned spaghetti, cheese, tuna mayo or curry
- omelette with grated cheese
- pasta in sauce.

Main meals

- casseroles, slow cooked meat in sauce or curry, corned beef hash, cottage pie, boneless fish in sauce
- pasta bake with minced meat or chicken cut into small pieces, macaroni, spaghetti bolognese
- risotto.

Nourishing snacks

If your appetite is reduced and you are only managing small portions, try to have nourishing snacks between meals. Try to have two to three nourishing snacks per day. Once your appetite is better and you are able to eat larger meals, you can stop eating these snacks.

Sweet nourishing snacks

- full fat yoghurt, mousse or fromage frais
- milky puddings such as custard, rice pudding, milk jelly, instant whip, blancmange, crème caramel, trifle, cheesecake, tiramisu
- soft fruit (avoid fruit with seeds and pith – the inner layer of the peel) with yoghurt, cream or custard
- soft cake, gateaux.

Savoury snacks

- slices of soft bread and dips such as houmous, guacamole, taramasalata
- soft cheese, for example brie, camembert, spreadable cheese
- soup (add grated cheese or milk powder).

Points to consider

You may have fewer bowel movements on a liquid diet. Ensuring you drink plenty of fluids, and increasing the fibre in your diet by adding fruit and vegetables to smoothies, milkshakes and soups may help. If you have any concerns about your bowels or you are feeling uncomfortable, please seek advice from your doctor.

Dental advice

Maintaining good oral hygiene is very important after your surgery to prevent complications.

You should:

- gently rinse your mouth with warm water after meals – avoid rinsing vigorously
- brush after meals and just before going to bed
- brush gently but thoroughly with a fluoride toothpaste from the day after surgery
- consider using a smaller sized brush and soften the bristles by running them under warm water
- carefully follow any specific instructions you have been given after your surgery.

Notes and queries

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol on 0117 922 2255.**

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