

Eating with an Oesophageal stent

Your oesophagus is the pipe which connects your throat to your stomach, otherwise known as your food pipe or gullet. Sometimes it can become narrowed or blocked which can make it difficult for the food that you eat to pass into your stomach.

An oesophageal stent is a small mesh tube that can be placed into your oesophagus, where it has narrowed, to allow food and fluid to pass into the stomach more easily. You will be advised by your treating team what you can eat and drink in the days following surgery.

General tips for eating with an oesophageal stent

- Sit upright and try to remain relaxed when eating. Take some deep breaths and try to visualise your oesophagus being open and relaxed
- Put small amounts in your mouth at once and chew food well before swallowing
- Eat little and often rather than having large meals at once (Try to eat 5-6 times per day)
- Moisten food with sauces, gravy, milk and butter
- Try to avoid very dry food which can be difficult to swallow (more information below)
- Take plenty of fluids before and after each meal, and take sips of fluids after mouthfuls of foods
- 'Clean' the stent after eating by having a fizzy drink
- Remain upright for at least 30 minutes after eating

Meat

Meat dishes to avoid:

- ✗ Tough or fibrous meat such as roast meat or steak
- ✗ Large pieces of meat
- ✗ Chicken or duck skin
- ✗ Fat surrounding meat such as that on bacon
- ✗ Dried meat such as jerky

Meat dishes that are safer:

- ✓ Tender meat that has been braised or stewed in small pieces
- ✓ Soft minced meat
- ✓ Meat pastes such as sandwich spreads or pate

Fish

Fish dishes to avoid:

- ✗ Fish with bones
- ✗ Fish in batter
- ✗ Fish in breadcrumbs
- ✗ Fish skin
- ✗ Squid or calamari
- ✗ Oysters

Fish dishes that are safer:

- ✓ Soft cooked (boiled or poached) flaked fish such as salmon or cod
- ✓ Fish in a sauce
- ✓ Fish pie

Starchy foods

Starchy foods to avoid:

- ✗ Fresh bread, doughy white bread
- ✗ Breads with seeds and bits
- ✗ Wholegrain cereals such as All Bran, Shredded Wheat and muesli with seeds and dried fruit
- ✗ Wholegrain or brown rice and pasta
- ✗ Potato skins or crispy potato outside such as on roast potatoes or chips

Starchy foods that are safer:

- ✓ Thinly sliced brown bread, with plenty of moist topping such as butter, jam or mayonnaise
- ✓ Crisp breads
- ✓ Well soaked Weetabix, rice crispies, porridge or cornflakes
- ✓ Well cooked white pasta and rice with sauce
- ✓ Mashed potatoes, jacket potatoes without skins

Eggs

Egg dishes to avoid:

- ✗ Hard boiled whole eggs
- ✗ Fried eggs

Egg dishes that are safer:

- ✓ Poached eggs
- ✓ Scrambled eggs
- ✓ Hard boiled and mashed with mayonnaise
- ✓ Omelette

Vegetables

Vegetables to avoid:

- ✗ Stringy vegetables such as green beans, sweetcorn, onions, celery
- ✗ Vegetables with seeds or pips such as tomatoes or the middle of cucumbers
- ✗ Vegetables that have skin that cannot be peeled such as peas
- ✗ Stalks of vegetables such as broccoli or cauliflower stalks

Vegetables that are safer:

- ✓ Well-cooked and peeled carrots, parsnips and other root vegetables
- ✓ Skinned peppers and tomatoes with no seeds
- ✓ Florets of broccoli and cauliflower

Fruit

Fruit to avoid:

- ✗ Fruit with skin that cannot be peeled such as oranges, grapefruit and grapes
- ✗ Fruit with pips that are eaten such as strawberries, kiwis and raspberries
- ✗ Fruit with a tough or fibrous texture such as pineapple or rhubarb
- ✗ Dried fruit

Fruits that are safer:

- ✓ Soft non fibrous fruit such as banana, ripe melon
- ✓ Soft peeled fruits such as peaches and nectarines
- ✓ Stewed/tinned fruits such as mandarin slices and pears
- ✓ Fruit juice or smoothies

Snacks

Snacks to avoid:

- ✗ Nuts and seeds
- ✗ Crisps
- ✗ Hard crackers
- ✗ Popcorn
- ✗ Dry cakes or biscuits

Snacks that are safer:

- ✓ Cheese puffs, skips, quavers
- ✓ Biscuits dipped in drinks
- ✓ Jelly
- ✓ Ice cream
- ✓ Yoghurts or rice pudding

What to do if your stent becomes blocked

If your stent becomes blocked you may feel pain or discomfort, difficulty swallowing or you may bring your food back up. Try to remain calm and not to panic. The blockage affects your food pipe and so will not affect your ability to breathe.

- Do not keep eating in an attempt to 'push' the blockage down
- Stand up and move around if you are able to
- Take small sips of a fizzy drink
- If your stent remains blocked you will need to contact your doctor, nurse or A&E department