



Avoiding Gastric Discomfort

Gastric (stomach and intestinal) discomfort can sometimes occur after bariatric surgery. Armed with proper knowledge and healthful eating habits, you can minimize or prevent this problem. Read on to learn about the causes and potential solutions for some of the most common post surgery gastric ‘blues.’ Remember to consult your surgeon with any specific questions or concerns.

Nausea

Eating high fat or high sugar foods, eating too much or too fast, eating and drinking at the same time, not chewing well, consuming dairy products (if you are lactose intolerant), or going for long periods without eating can cause nausea. If you experience nausea:

- Avoid foods with high fat or more than 2 grams of added sugar.
- Use Lactaid® with dairy products if needed.
- Take vitamins after meals, not on an empty stomach.
- If your nausea occurs upon waking, drink a small glass of juice or eat a cracker to return your blood sugar to a normal level and settle your stomach.
- To prevent overfilling the pouch, avoid fluids for a longer interval before and after meals.
- Avoid foods with strong flavors and odors and foods that have caused nausea in the past.

Reflux

Your pouch will be full after eating just a small amount of food. Eating too fast or too much of either food or fluids can cause reflux. Reflux occurs when the food or beverage comes right back up. Reflux has no force behind it like vomiting. Vomiting indicates illness; reflux indicates that you may need to make any of the following changes:

- Eat slowly, take smaller bites and chew foods very well.
- Keep portions small--about ½ cup -3/4 cup per meal.
- Eat six small meals—going long periods without eating increases reflux.
- Separate fluids from meals by a longer interval, to prevent overfilling of the pouch.
- Avoid caffeinated, carbonated or alcoholic beverages.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea occasionally occurs after surgery. Eating foods that are high in added sugar or fat, lactose intolerance, too much or too little fiber, too much caffeine, sugar alcohols, and eating and drinking at the same time can bring it on.. Use a food log if you have difficulty determining what is causing the problem. If diarrhea is severe or lasts more than two days, call your doctor. Diarrhea can quickly lead to dehydration. To prevent diarrhea:

- Avoid foods and beverages that are high in added sugar or fat.

- Check the label of the foods and beverages you are consuming for sugar alcohols (ingredients that end in “ol”). Most people tolerate these sweeteners in small amounts, but too much may result in gas and diarrhea.
- Use Lactaid® with dairy products if you can't tolerate them well.
- Talk to the nutritionist about the fiber content of your diet. Any drastic changes in dietary fiber can lead to constipation or diarrhea.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Do not eat and drink at the same time.

Constipation

Inadequate fluid or fiber intake, lack of exercise, specific medications and other changes may cause constipation. To encourage regular bowel movements, use the following guidelines:

- Drink a minimum of 64 oz of fluid a day.
- Walk at least 30 minutes daily.
- Add fiber to your diet by increasing the number of servings of fresh fruits and vegetables, wheat bran, beans, and other high fiber foods.
- Mix ½ cup of no added sugar applesauce with 2 tsp. wheat bran and Splenda® to taste. Eat cold or heat in the microwave for a high fiber source.
- Add a fiber supplement such as Benefiber® to your diet.
- Use Fiber-Stat daily. It tastes like water, does not need mixing, contains 15 grams of fiber per one ounce serving, and contains fructo-oligosaccharides to help re-establish good intestinal bacteria.

Gas

You are more likely to experience gas after surgery because more of the nutrients are making their way to the large intestine. To keep gas in check:

- Sip slowly. Don't use straws. Avoid carbonation.
- Eat slowly and calmly.
- Keep fruit juice intake to 6 oz daily.
- Use Lactaid® with dairy products.
- Avoid gas-forming foods such as beans, peas, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and onions.
- Limit foods and beverages sweetened with sugar alcohols.
- Limit foods with higher fat content.
- Try Beano® (available at your local pharmacy), GasEx® (available at your local pharmacy), or Devrom® (available online--search 'Devrom').