

Oesophageal stents and managing your diet after

An oesophageal stent is a tube placed in the oesophagus (food pipe or gullet) when there is a blockage or narrowing. The aim of the stent is to make swallowing more comfortable and effective by allowing food to pass through the oesophagus more easily.

This information sheet provides information on stents and how to manage your diet after a stent insertion.

What is an oesophageal stent?

An oesophageal stent is a tube made of a flexible metal mesh, approximately 2cm wide. It is placed into the oesophagus during an endoscopy and positioned in the area that has narrowed. It gently expands to allow fluid and foods to pass into the stomach more easily.



How do I prepare for a stent

The procedure is performed as a day case in the endoscopy department. You will be asked to not eat or drink anything 6 hours prior to the procedure time. Advice on

stopping blood thinning medication and on the management of diabetes will be provided if relevant to you. Local anaesthetic spray is used to numb your throat, and, if required, sedating medication can be provided. This may make you drowsy but you will not be asleep. The procedure takes approximately 20 minutes.

To ask questions about the preparation, diabetes or medications you can call the endoscopy nursing staff on **01225 821425** or **01225 821788**.

What are the risks of having an oesophageal stent?

Stent insertion is generally safe, but as with all medical treatments there are some risks

- Minor bleeding can occur, this tends to stop without any further intervention
- Heartburn and acid reflux post procedure can be relieved with medication if required
- Occasionally it may not be possible to fit a stent for technical reasons, this will be discussed with you after the procedure
- A tear (perforation) in the oesophagus can sometime occur when inserting the stent; this is managed by admission to hospital for antibiotics and if needed further intervention

How will I feel after the stent insertion?

The numb feeling in throat wears off after an hour or so. A chest xray will be performed to confirm the position of stent. Following review of the chest xray, fluids will be introduced slowly. As the stent expands it can cause some pain in the chest area which normally improves after 72 hours. Over the counter painkillers such as paracetamol can be helpful, if pain persists please contact your specialist nurse or doctor.

If your ability to swallow does not improve, despite following the advice in this leaflet, please contact your specialist nurse or doctor.

When can I eat after the stent is placed?

Once your stent has been placed, the doctor will advise on when you can start eating and drinking. You will need to start with thin fluids, and build gradually up to a soft, moist diet, as described in the table below.

Unfortunately some people with stents cannot tolerate all foods, so have to remain on a liquid or pureed diet. If you are struggling with consistencies in stage 1 or 2, please do not attempt stage 3.

	Ideas for intake	Tips
Stage 1: Liquid diet	Drinks made up with full fat milk, e.g. coffee, hot chocolate, malted drinks Fortified full fat milk – add 2-4 tsps of milk powder to a pint of full fat milk Milkshakes with added ice cream Complan or Meritene Energis powdered milkshakes Yoghurt drinks Soup with no lumps, with cream	Take your time when taking fluids. If liquids are well tolerated you can move on to milky porridge, Weetabix, thin cheese sauce
Stage 2: Pureed diet	Mashed or sieved vegetables Blended/sieved soups Blended meat, fish, eggs See pureed diet sheet for detailed information	Needs to be free from any lumps and have a smooth consistency Add extra gravy or sauce to foods when blending Add extra butter/cream/cheese to foods when blending to add energy
Stage 3: Soft diet	Porridge, Ready Brek, Weetabix, Rice Crispies Soft fruit, e.g. stewed apple, banana, tinned fruit Tender meat/meat substitute in gravy, fish in white sauce Mashed potato Well cooked vegetables, e.g. carrots, swede Milk puddings, e.g. rice pudding, tapioca, custard Milky drinks	Food no longer needs to be pureed A soft diet needs little chewing, and can be broken up or mashed with a fork Moisten food with gravy, sauces, cream, to make swallowing easier Check all foods for bones and skin See soft diet sheet for detailed information

Some people may find it difficult to tolerate an increase in texture of foods, if you note difficulty swallowing or blockage of the stent; you should go back down to the stage you tolerated.

Hints and tips

- Ensure that you chew foods well before swallowing to minimise the risk of blockage
- If you wear dentures ensure they fit well

- Spit foods out that you cannot chew properly
- Eat slowly
- Take plenty of fluids before and after each meal, and take sips of fluids after mouthfuls of foods
- Fizzy drinks taken at the end of each meal may help to keep the stent clean
- Eat sat upright, and aim to stay upright for at least half an hour after eating
- Take small and frequent meals

What do I do if my stent blocks?

- Following the hints and tips section, advice on foods and making use of the alternatives listed reduced the risk of the stent blocking.
- It is also helpful to speak with your GP or pharmacist to review your medications, to ensure they are in a form that will not increase risk of stent blockage.

If you feel that your stent may be blocked:

- Try not to panic, the blockage affects your food pipe and will not affect your ability to breathe
- Stop having anything to eat, stand up and have a few sips of a drink, try a warm or carbonated drink (cola can be helpful)
- If the blockage continues, contact:
 - Jo Price Upper GI Nurse Specialist on 01225 821453
 - Tina Thresher Endoscopy manager on 01225 824075 Mon-Fri 08.00-17.00
 - Out of Hours contact Haygarth ward (B50) on 01225 824430



What foods should be avoided after stent insertion?

	Foods to avoid	Suitable alternatives
Fruit	Pineapple Fruit skins and pith, e.g. from oranges, grapefruit, etc Dried fruit	Soft peeled fruits Stewed/tinned fruits Fruit juice
Vegetables	Green salads and raw vegetables Stringy vegetables, e.g. green beans, onions, celery Okra Seeds and skin of tomatoes	Soft, well cooked vegetables Mash/pureed vegetables if needed Seedless/skinless tomatoes, or tinned tomatoes
Eggs	Fried egg whites and hard boiled eggs	Other eggs, including poached, soft boiled, omelet, soufflé, and scrambled
Meat	Tough meat and gristle Large chunks of meat Dry meat Poultry skin	Soft, tender meat Stewed meat Minced meat Dahl
Dairy products	Chunks of cheese	Grated cheese
Fish	Fish with bones Fish skin Battered fish/dry fish	Boneless fish Poached, steamed, and boil in the bag fish
Bread and cereals	Soft fresh bread Crusty dry bread White bread and toasts Chapatti Coarse cereals, e.g. muesli, All Bran, shredded wheat, any cereals with dried fruit/nuts	Thinly sliced brown bread, with plenty of topping Weetabix, Rice Crispies, Porridge, cornflakes
Potatoes and starchy carbohydrates	Chips Crisps Yams Plantain Green banana	Mashed potato Jacket potato without the skin Well cooked pasta and rice with sauce Tinned spaghetti
Desserts	Dry cakes Biscuits Popcorn	Jelly Ice-cream Custard Yoghurt Biscuits (dipped in drinks)
Other	Nuts Coarse marmalade	Shredless marmalade



What can I do if I lose my appetite?

You may notice that your appetite is reduced and that you are unable to eat the same portion sizes you would normally. Eating small, frequent meals and snacks can help with this, and choosing higher energy and higher protein choices can help increase your nutritional intake, alongside adding these to other foods:

Helpful additions	What you can add them to
Full fat milk	Tea, coffee, hot chocolate, malted drinks Breakfast cereals Mashed potato Custard, smoothies, milkshakes White sauces
Milk powder	Tea, coffee, hot chocolate, malted drinks Breakfast cereals Soups
Butter	Bread Potatoes, mashed potatoes and vegetables Omelets, scrambled eggs
Cream	Coffee, hot chocolate Breakfast cereals Custard, jelly, fruit Mashed potatoes Sauces and soups
Cheese	Main meals e.g. cottage pie, shepherd's pie Mashed or jacket potatoes Omlet, scrambled eggs Sauces Pasta
Honey	Breakfast cereal Roasted vegetables
Sugar	Tea, coffee, hot chocolate Breakfast cereals
Jam	Rice pudding

If you are losing weight a dietitian can recommend nutritional supplement drinks; these are available in a range of consistencies and flavours. If you are concerned about your weight, please contact your dietitian or nurse specialist for further information and advice.



Where can I get further help and advice?

Jo Price Upper GI Nurse Specialist 01225821453

Sophie Dobbs Macmillan Specialist Dietitian 01225 824398

Out of Hours Haygarth ward (B50) on 01225 824430

Oesophageal Patient's Association www.opa.org.uk 0121 704 9860

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk 0808 808 0000

Wiltshire Farm Foods (provides ready-made pureed and soft meal options)
<https://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/> 0800 077 3100

Oakhouse Foods (provides ready-made pureed meal options)
<https://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk/>

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.