

Dietary Guidelines After Hiatus Hernia Repair & Anti-Reflux Surgery

Following surgery, swelling around the gastro-oesophageal junction may temporarily make swallowing more difficult. The repair is also supported by sutures during early healing, so care is required when reintroducing food.

Diet should be progressed gradually over approximately 4–6 weeks. If pain, discomfort, or difficulty swallowing occurs, return to the previous stage for 2–4 days before progressing again.

Stage 1: Fluids (First 2 Weeks)

Fluids place minimal pressure on the surgical site. A fluid is anything with a runny consistency that could be consumed through a straw.

Examples: Tea and coffee, protein shakes, juices, thin soups, hydrating ice blocks, water.

Tips: Start with small sips; avoid heavily carbonated drinks; prioritise protein-containing fluids; consider fibre supplements; aim for ≥ 1 litre/day.

Stage 2: Pureed Foods (Weeks 3–4)

Introduce smooth, lump-free foods. The consistency should be similar to baby food (spoonable puree). Add liquid if required to achieve this texture.

Examples: Pureed soups, blended casseroles, yoghurt, pureed vegetables and fruit, scrambled eggs.

Tips: Eat slowly, small portions, focus on protein, consider a multivitamin.

Stage 3: Soft Foods (Weeks 5–6)

Progress to foods that can be mashed easily with a fork.

Examples: Soft vegetables, curries, eggs, pasta, fish, minced or slow-cooked meats, soft rice.

Tips: Chew thoroughly, allow 20–30 minutes per meal, eat smaller frequent meals.

Stage 4: Regular Diet (After 6 Weeks)

Gradually return to a normal diet as tolerated.

Ongoing habits: Small meals, chew well, avoid gulping, limit fizzy drinks, moderate alcohol.

Foods that may remain difficult: Doughy bread, tough meats, chicken breast, sticky rice.

Managing Common Symptoms

Food feels stuck: Stop eating, sip warm fluids, wait before retrying. Revert to softer foods if persistent.

Gas or bloating: Common due to reduced ability to belch. Avoid fizzy drinks and straws.

Hydration difficulty: Use frequent small sips, warm fluids, and electrolyte ice blocks.

When to Seek Medical Advice

Persistent vomiting, inability to tolerate fluids, dehydration, fever (>38°C), or worsening severe pain.

General Nutritional Advice

Aim to include protein at most meals and snacks to support healing. Maintain hydration and avoid large meals.

Take your time when eating and stop if discomfort develops.

Sample Meal Plan

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Breakfast	Protein shake	Weetbix + milk	Scrambled eggs + avocado
Morning Tea	Juice	Yoghurt + puree	Soft fruit
Lunch	Soup	Pureed soup	Salmon + mash
Afternoon Tea	Tea/coffee	Yoghurt	Yoghurt
Dinner	Protein shake	Pureed casserole	Soft pasta / bolognese