BARIATRIC SURGERY · PATIENT GUIDE

Diet after gastric sleeve or bypass surgery: the 5 stages

For gastric sleeve, One-Port Sleeve, gastric bypass, and mini gastric bypass.

> **Please read first.** Cross Border Medical Connection Inc. is a coordination company, not a medical provider. This guide is general information. It doesn't replace your surgeon's instructions. Always follow the specific instructions from Dr. Serrano's team.

Duodenal switch, SADI-S, or revision? Your protein goal, vitamins, and stages are different. Follow the plan Dr. Serrano's team gives you. SADI-S needs supplements for life; duodenal switch needs long-term supplements as your surgeon directs. If you had a revision, your plan depends on the revision performed.

Last updated: October 23, 2026

Your two daily goals

Your stomach is smaller now, and it's healing. In the first weeks, focus on two things:

1. **Fluids:** 64 oz or more (about 2 liters) a day, or as Dr. Serrano's team directs.
2. **Protein:** 60 to 80 grams a day, or as Dr. Serrano's team directs.

Everything else in this guide supports those two goals. Move through the stages in order, and don't skip ahead.

What are the 5 stages of the bariatric diet?

In order, the 5 stages are clear liquids, then protein shakes and full liquids, pureed foods, soft foods, and regular healthy eating. Dr. Serrano's team sets the timing of each stage for you, so move ahead only when they say you're ready.

Your surgeon's team tells you when to move to each stage, usually over several weeks. Each stage below shows what to eat and how much at a time.

Stage 1: Clear liquids

This stage usually starts in the hospital. Take tiny sips, about 1 oz (30 mL) at a time.

Type	Options
Water	Plain, or with sugar-free flavor drops
Electrolyte drinks	Sugar-free kinds, such as Gatorade Zero or Powerade Zero
Broth	Clear broth (bone, vegetable, chicken, or beef)
Tea	Herbal (ginger, chamomile, peppermint) or decaf
Treats	Sugar-free gelatin or ice pops
Protein	Clear protein drinks or protein water, if Dr. Serrano's team allows them

Skip anything fizzy, sweet, caffeinated, or alcoholic.

Stage 2: Protein shakes and full liquids

Aim for 2 to 4 oz at a time. Protein shakes are your main food in this stage.

Type	Options
Shakes	Ready-made or powder shakes, low in sugar (whey isolate or plant-based)
Milk	Skim, 1%, ultra-filtered (such as Fairlife), or unsweetened soy or almond milk. Choose lactose-free if milk upsets you. Soy milk has more protein.
Yogurt	Plain Greek yogurt or unsweetened kefir, thinned until you can drink it
Soups	Broth-based soups or low-fat cream soups, strained smooth (for example tomato, mushroom, broccoli, or chicken)
Protein broth	Broth with unflavored protein powder stirred in
Treats	Sugar-free pudding made with milk and protein powder, or sugar-free cocoa made with milk or a protein shake

Stage 3: Pureed foods

Blend everything until smooth, like baby food, with no lumps. Have 2 to 4 tablespoons per meal, 3 meals a day, plus protein shakes.

Food group	Options
Protein, eaten first	Chicken, turkey, or tuna blended with broth, plain Greek yogurt, or low-fat mayo · pureed salmon, tilapia, or other white fish · soft-scrambled eggs or egg whites · ricotta or cottage cheese · plain Greek yogurt · hummus or pureed lentils · low-fat refried beans · silken tofu
Vegetables, cooked soft and pureed	Carrots, zucchini, squash, pumpkin · sweet potato · mashed cauliflower · green beans or spinach
Fruit, in small amounts	Unsweetened applesauce · mashed ripe banana · pureed pears or peaches canned in juice, not syrup · mashed avocado

Meal ideas

- Soft-scrambled egg with a spoon of cottage cheese
- Pureed chicken with mashed cauliflower
- Tuna blended with Greek yogurt
- Low-fat refried beans topped with melted low-fat cheese

Keep seasoning mild. Spicy food can bother a healing stomach.

Stage 4: Soft foods

Food should be moist and tender enough to mash with a fork. Have ¼ to ½ cup per meal. Try new foods one by one, so you can see how each one agrees with you.

Food group	Options
Protein, eaten first	Moist ground chicken, turkey, or lean beef · soft meatballs made with lean meat · flaky fish like cod, sole, tilapia, or salmon · canned tuna, salmon, or chicken · chopped cooked shrimp · eggs, scrambled, poached, soft-boiled, or in an omelet with soft vegetables · low-fat cheeses like panela, mozzarella, string cheese, or cottage cheese · soft tofu · well-cooked beans and lentils
Vegetables, cooked soft, no skins	Carrots, zucchini, squash · spinach and other cooked greens · broccoli and cauliflower tops · well-cooked green beans · peeled tomatoes
Fruit, soft, peeled, no seeds	Banana · cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon · ripe mango, peaches, or pears · fruit canned in juice
Soft starches, in small amounts	Oatmeal · sweet potato · mashed potato made with milk

Meal ideas

- Spinach and panela omelet
- Baked flaky fish with soft carrots
- Turkey meatballs with zucchini

- Tuna salad with a little sliced avocado

Not yet: salads and raw vegetables · fruit skins, seeds, and nuts · bread, rice, pasta, and tortillas · tough, dry meats like steak or pork chops · fried, greasy, or spicy food

Stage 5: Regular healthy eating

Start this stage only after your surgeon's team clears you. Keep portions small. About 1 cup per meal is a common long-term size.

Food group	Options
Protein, eaten first	Chicken breast, turkey, lean beef, pork tenderloin · cooked fish and seafood · eggs and egg whites · cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, low-fat cheese · lentils, beans, chickpeas, edamame, tofu
Vegetables	Any cooked vegetable · salads and raw vegetables, added slowly and chewed well
Fruit	Most fresh fruit, such as berries, apples, oranges, and grapes, starting with small servings
Healthy fats, a little	Avocado · olive oil · a small handful of nuts or seeds, chewed well
Whole grains, a little	Oatmeal · quinoa · a few whole wheat crackers or a small corn tortilla

Meal ideas

- Grilled chicken and roasted vegetables
- Salmon with a little quinoa
- Cooked shrimp salad with avocado
- Turkey in lettuce wraps
- Greek yogurt with berries and a few chopped nuts

Go slow with bread, rice, pasta, tough red meat, and stringy raw vegetables. Many people find these hard to tolerate.

How much should you drink each day?

Goal: 64 oz or more (about 2 liters) a day, or as Dr. Serrano's team directs. Low fluid intake is among the most frequent reasons people return to the hospital after bariatric surgery.

- Sip about 1 oz every 15 minutes throughout your waking hours. Don't gulp.
- Carry a water bottle and log every drink.
- Don't drink with meals. Keep a 30-minute drink-free gap before each meal and another one after it. This leaves room for protein and keeps your stomach from getting too full.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, sugary drinks, and alcohol. Skip caffeine in the first weeks, or follow Dr. Serrano's team's advice.

Fluid tracker (8 oz each):

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Signs you may be low on fluids: dark urine, peeing less often, dry mouth, dizziness, headache, tiredness, or nausea. Contact Dr. Serrano's team if you notice these.

How much protein do you need each day?

Goal: 60 to 80 grams a day, or as Dr. Serrano's team directs. Protein helps your incisions heal, protects your muscles as you lose weight, and keeps your energy up.

- Start every meal with protein, then vegetables, then anything else.
- Pick shakes with 20 to 30 g of protein and less than 5 g of sugar per serving.
- If dairy bothers you, try whey isolate or a plant-based protein.

How much protein is in common foods?

Food	Serving	Protein (about)
Chicken or turkey	3 oz	25 g
Fish	3 oz	20–22 g
Canned tuna	3 oz	20 g
Protein shake	1 shake	20–30 g
Plain Greek yogurt	6 oz	15–17 g
Cottage cheese	½ cup	12–14 g
Firm tofu	½ cup	10–20 g
Beans or lentils	½ cup	7–9 g
Low-fat cheese	1 oz	7 g
Egg	1 large	6 g

Sample day: about 75 g of protein

Meal	Food	Protein (about)
Breakfast	1 protein shake	25 g
Lunch	½ cup cottage cheese with soft fruit	13 g
Snack	6 oz plain Greek yogurt	16 g
Dinner	3 oz baked fish with soft vegetables	21 g
Total		**About 75 g**

Lifelong vitamins and minerals, as Dr. Serrano's team prescribes

Choose a bariatric multivitamin your surgeon's team approves (it should include thiamine, folate, iron, zinc, and copper).

Supplement	How to take it
Bariatric multivitamin	Every day. Chewable or liquid at first.
Thiamine (vitamin B1)	Daily, usually in your bariatric multivitamin
Calcium citrate	Split into smaller doses. Keep 2 or more hours between it and iron. Dr. Serrano's team sets your amount.
Iron	As prescribed. Keep 2 or more hours between it and calcium.
Vitamin B12	As prescribed
Vitamin D	As prescribed

Dr. Serrano's team confirms your doses based on your procedure and your lab results.

You'll need regular lab work to track your vitamin levels; ask your U.S. doctor and Dr. Serrano's team how often.

Everyday habits: meals, alcohol, nicotine, and pain relievers

1. Let each meal last 20 to 30 minutes.
2. Take small bites, and chew each one 20 to 30 times.
3. Stop at the first sign of fullness, like pressure, hiccups, or a runny nose.
4. Have 3 small meals and 1 or 2 protein snacks a day. Don't skip meals.
5. Avoid sweets, sugar, fried food, and fatty food. These foods can lead to dumping syndrome (sweating, cramps, diarrhea, and a racing heart), especially after gastric bypass.

6. No alcohol for at least as long as Dr. Serrano's team advises, often 6 to 12 months or more. Alcohol affects you faster and more strongly after surgery, and the risk of alcohol problems goes up; talk to your care team before you drink.
7. No nicotine in any form, for good. It slows healing and raises the risk of ulcers.
8. If you take aspirin for your heart, a stent, or after a stroke, don't stop or restart it on your own; your cardiologist and Dr. Serrano's team decide together. Otherwise, don't take ibuprofen, naproxen, or aspirin unless Dr. Serrano's team tells you to. Ask the team which pain reliever to use and how much.

Caring for your incisions

Your surgery leaves one or more small incisions on your abdomen. Eating well and drinking enough fluids help them heal.

Do

- Keep them clean and dry.
- Shower 24 to 48 hours after surgery, unless you're told otherwise. Let soapy water run over the incisions, rinse, and pat dry with a clean towel.
- Leave skin glue or Steri-Strips alone. They usually come off on their own in 7 to 14 days.
- Wear soft, loose clothes, and your abdominal binder if you were given one.
- Once scars heal, use sunscreen on them to help keep them from darkening.

Don't

- Scrub the incisions.
- Soak in a bath, pool, hot tub, or the ocean for at least 2 to 4 weeks, or until they've fully closed.
- Put creams, ointments, lotions, or powders on them unless Dr. Serrano's team tells you to.
- Lift more than 10 to 15 lb for 4 to 6 weeks, or until Dr. Serrano's team clears you.
- Pick at scabs or pull strips off early.

Contact Dr. Serrano's team if you notice: redness spreading around an incision · swelling, warmth, or pain that gets worse · pus or a bad smell · an incision that opens · a fever over 101°F (38.3°C).

Moving around and the trip home

- Walk several times a day, from surgery day on. Walking can make blood clots less likely and ease gas pain.
- On your flight home, walk the aisle, sip fluids, and wear compression stockings if Dr. Serrano's team recommends them.
- Before you travel, line up a doctor at home who will see you for follow-up.

Who to contact

Questions about your diet, symptoms, or medications? Contact Dr. Serrano's team, using the number they gave you when you left the hospital. For travel and scheduling, contact our coordinators: call (619) 629-0222, text (619) 819-9464, or email contact@cbmedicalconnection.com.

To compare every weight-loss procedure we coordinate, see the bariatric surgery overview.

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