

## Tips from your Dietitian: Transitioning to Solid Foods and Troubleshooting

Follow these guidelines and tips to promote food tolerance and aid in your transition to solid foods.

- **Aim to eat every 3-5 hours (4-6 times per day) and keep the volume of food consumed to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup in a single sitting (volume of food will depend on the foods' texture and density)**
  - Use smaller plates and utensils to help with meal size
- **Try one new food at a time to determine tolerance**
  - Keeping a food journal can help you keep track of this
- **Prioritize protein and always eat it first**
  - The first 2-4 ounces ( $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) of food should be high in protein
- **Eat slowly, allow 20-30 minutes to finish a meal**
  - Avoid eating while distracted (multi-tasking, on the phone, watching TV, on the computer, while driving), as this can cause you to eat quickly
  - Create a calm atmosphere while eating
  - Use a timer to help pace your meals
  - Record starting and finishing times in your food log
  - Put your utensil down and take short breaths in between bites
  - Split your food in half on the plate, take 15 minutes to eat the first half and 15 minutes to eat the second half
- **Chew well**
  - Your stomach's ability to digest is now limited, chewing your food will help compensate for this and increase the likelihood of a food's tolerance
  - Cut your food into small bites, this will require less work to chew your food
  - Think about chewing all foods to "applesauce" consistency before swallowing
- **Avoid drinking fluids with meals, drink 30 minutes before or 30 minutes after eating**
  - Keep all fluids off the table while eating
  - Set a timer once you finish eating for 30 minutes so you know when it is time to begin drinking again
  - Eat fish/meat-based soups with a fork and discard all the leftover liquid
- **Ensure that your foods are moist and not too dry**
  - Prepare meats in a crock pot or slow cooker
  - Prepare meats with low-fat sauces, marinades, salad dressings, salsas, yoghurt, milk, or broth
  - Cover meats with a lid or aluminum foil when baking or grilling
  - Pound out meats into thinner pieces before cooking
  - Choose more moist proteins choices such as tofu, beans, 93% lean ground beef/chicken, chicken tenders, boneless/skinless chicken thighs, etc.
  - When reheating food in the microwave, be sure to add additional sauce/gravy to avoid your meals being too dry
  - Avoid over-cooking meats by using a food thermometer

- **Limit or avoid stringy/chewy/sticky/crunchy foods, as these are often not well tolerated initially and can cause blockages and/or plugging**
  - These can include fresh bread, sticky rice, pasta, melted cheese, raw veggies, nuts and seeds, and popcorn
- **Limit or avoid tough, fibrous foods for 3-6 months following surgery**
  - These can include grapes, celery, and sweet potatoes
  - Cooking these foods until tender and chewing them well can help them be better tolerated
- **Learn to identify hunger cues and distinguish between true and emotional hunger**
  - Signs of true hunger include weakness, lethargy, feelings of tiredness and fuzzy thoughts
- **Learn to recognize fullness/satiety**
  - Try to identify your new feelings of fullness so you do not overeat
  - Common symptoms that you may be full include the hiccups, the feeling like you need to belch, and/or slight nausea
  - Practice eating more slowly so you can identify these symptoms and stop eating before they occur
  - Avoid distractions while you are eating
  - Keep a food journal to record your observations
- **Aim for 150 minutes per week of exercise, and 2 days per week of strength training**
- **Use Listerine strips or mouthwash if you are experiencing bad breath**
  - Avoid excess sugar-free mints or gum
- **Try different strategies to control gas if you are experiencing bloating or other symptoms**
  - Avoid or limit intake of foods that may cause gas/bloating (beans, fiber-rich foods such as berries, oatmeal, or carrots, dairy, sugar substitutes, and/or fatty foods)
  - When eliminating foods, keep track of your symptoms and try to identify foods (such as the ones listed above) that may be contributing to the gas/bloating
  - Keeping a food journal may help you identify the causes, monitor and avoid these symptoms
  - Reduce excess air while swallowing, as this can make you feel bloated
  - Chew and eat slowly, avoid gulping food and liquids
  - Avoid carbonated liquids
  - Skip chewing gum and drinking through a straw