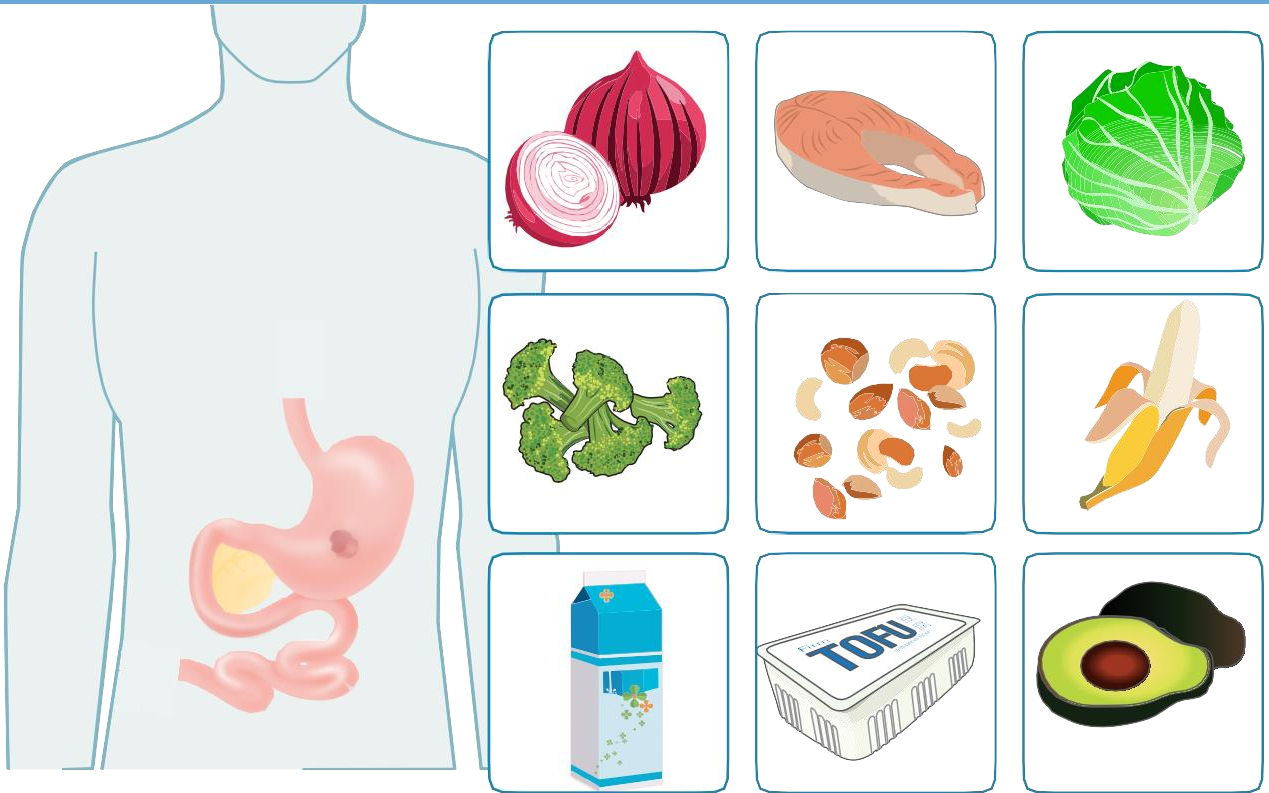


Stomach Cancer

Section 2 : Nutrition



Centre universitaire
de santé McGill



McGill University
Health Centre

Office d'éducation des patients
Patient Education Office

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IMPORTANT

Information provided by this booklet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.

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Before Surgery :

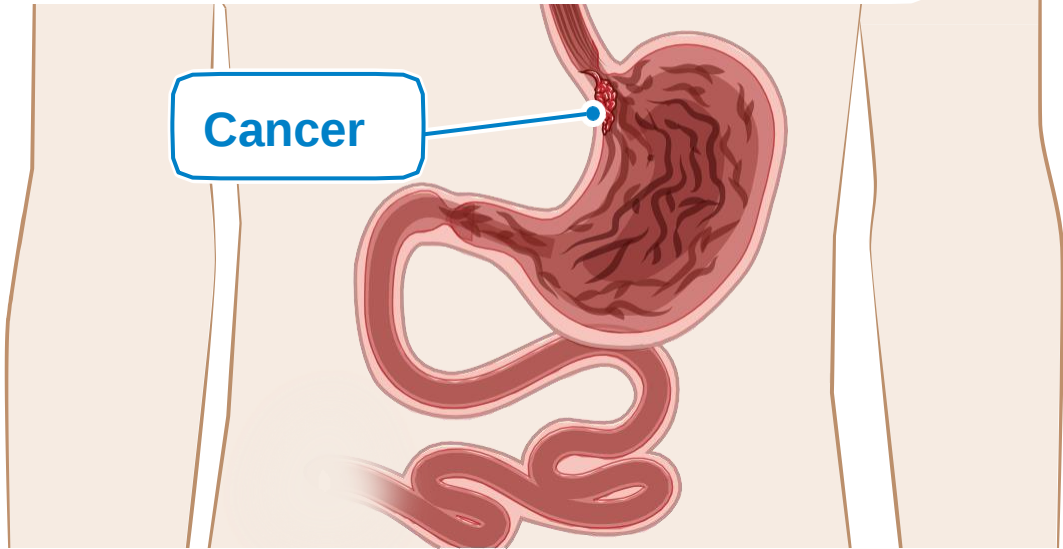
What is dysphagia?

One of the symptoms of stomach cancer is trouble swallowing. This is called **dysphagia**.

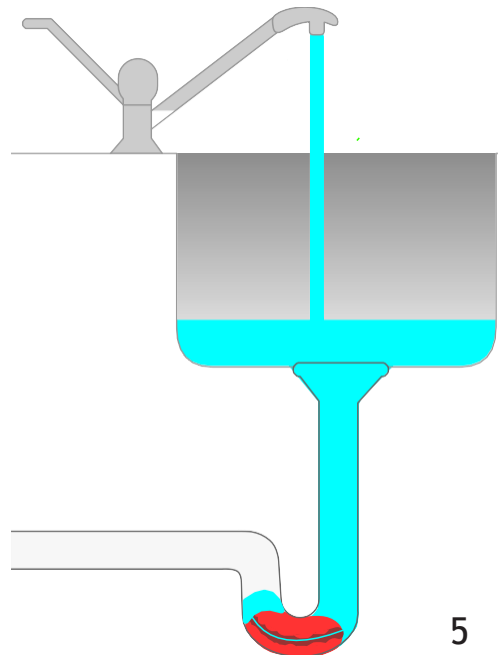


When someone has trouble swallowing, they often eat less. This leads to unwanted weight loss.

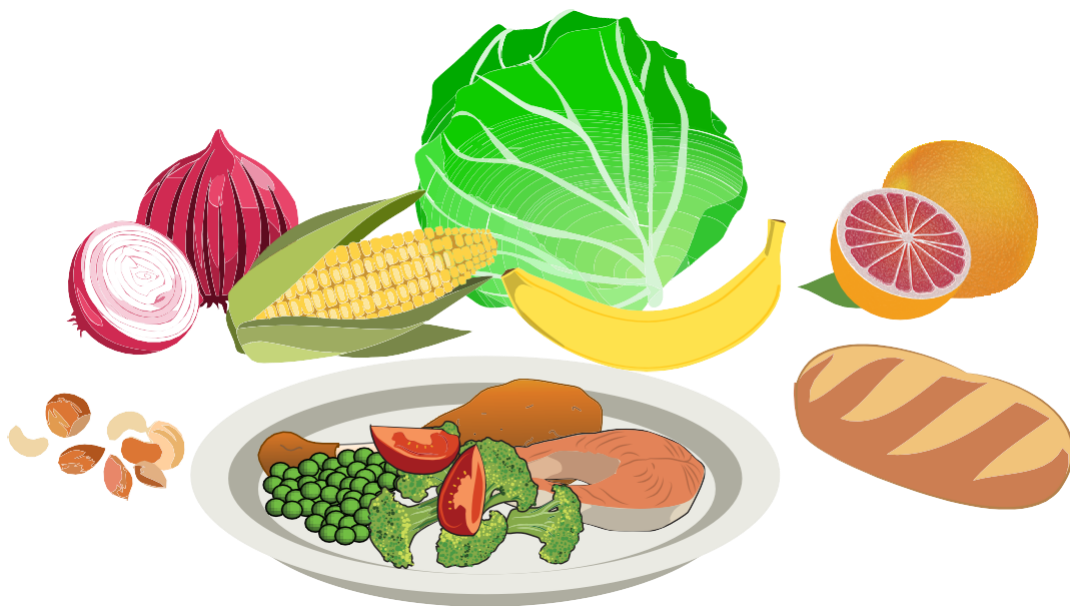
When a cancerous mass is at the opening of the stomach, swallowing is difficult because it is hard for food to pass through.



Cancer at the opening of the stomach is like a blocked kitchen sink. With a narrow opening, there is less space for food to pass through. If you drink too quickly, fluid can back up and you may vomit. Chunks of food will not pass and can cause pain and discomfort.



Some people may experience discomfort when they swallow certain foods. They may avoid hard foods, such as raw fruits or vegetables, bread or steak.



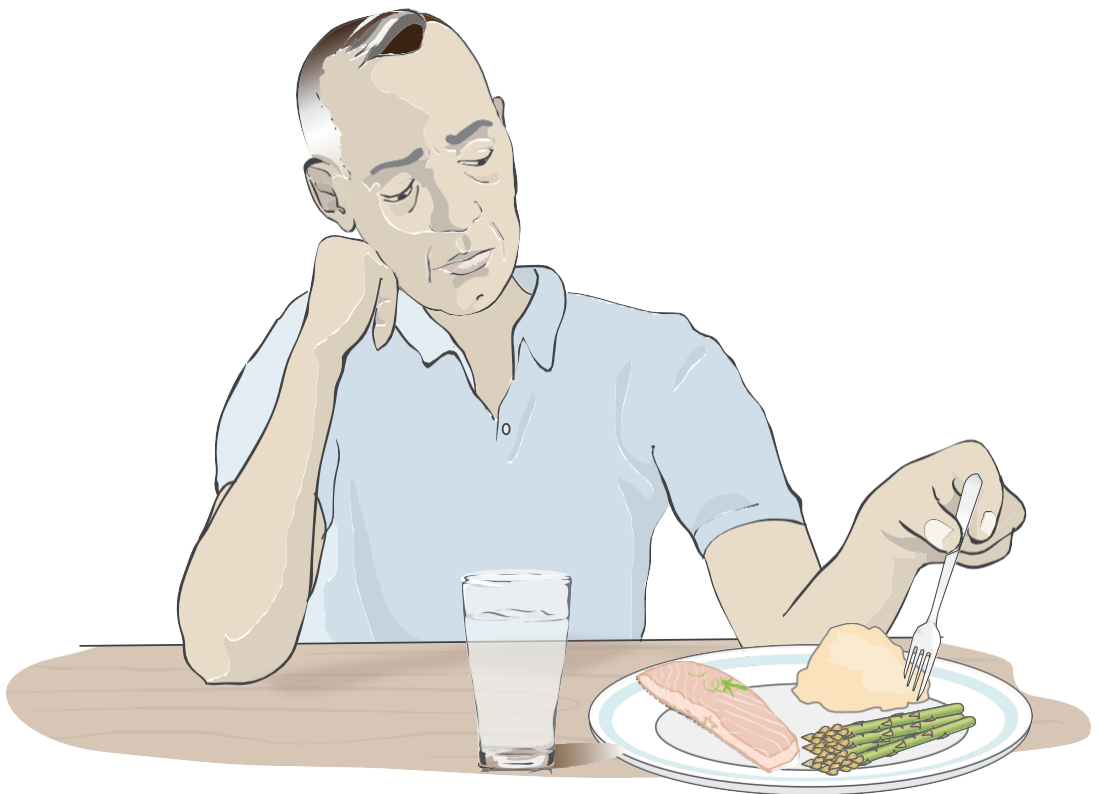
If you have trouble swallowing, your doctor will refer you to a nutritionist. They will help you pick the foods that are best for you and suggest ways to prevent further weight loss while you go through your cancer treatment.

Before Surgery :

What is early satiety?

One of the symptoms of stomach cancer is feeling full quickly. This is called **early satiety**.

When people feel full quickly, they don't eat much. This can lead to weight loss.





When a cancerous mass is in the middle or end of the stomach, it can make the stomach very stiff. This prevents the stomach from stretching the way it usually does when you eat a meal.

As a result, you may only be able to eat small amounts at a time and you may lose your appetite.

If you have early satiety, your doctor will refer you to a nutritionist.

They will help you pick the foods that are best for you and explain ways to prevent more weight loss while you go through your cancer treatment.



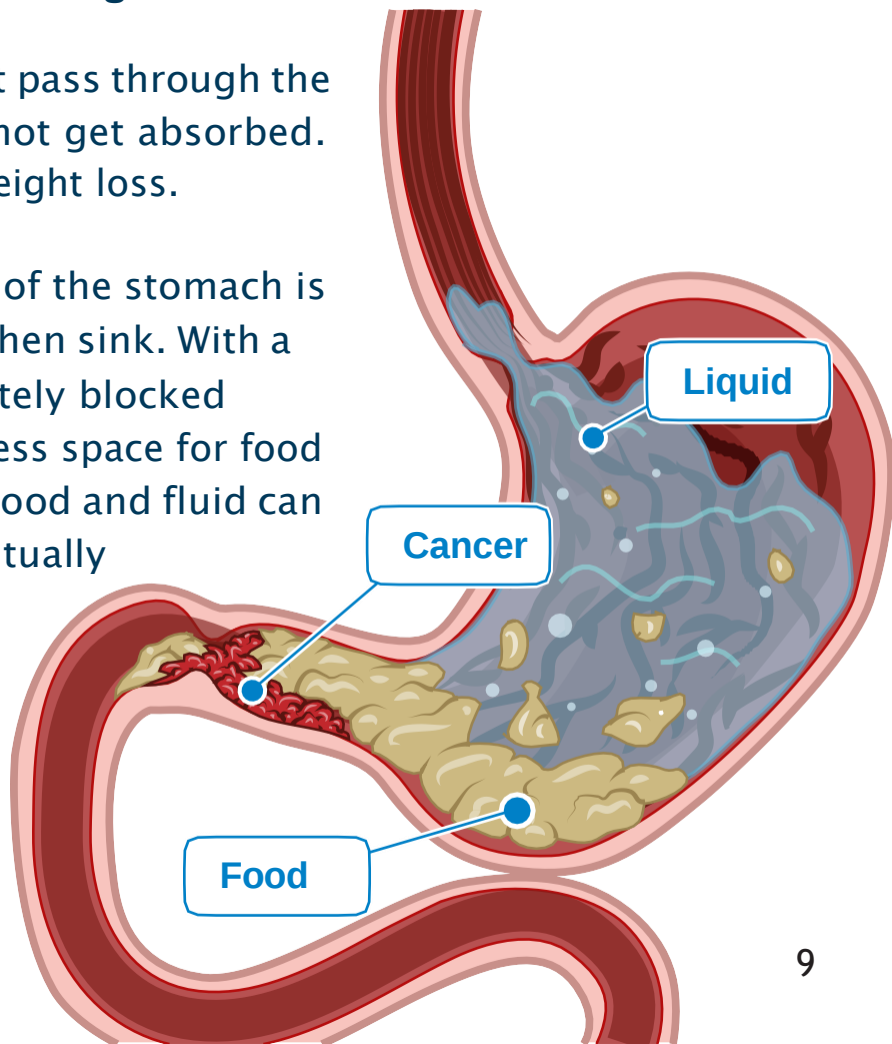
Before Surgery :

What is gastric blockage?

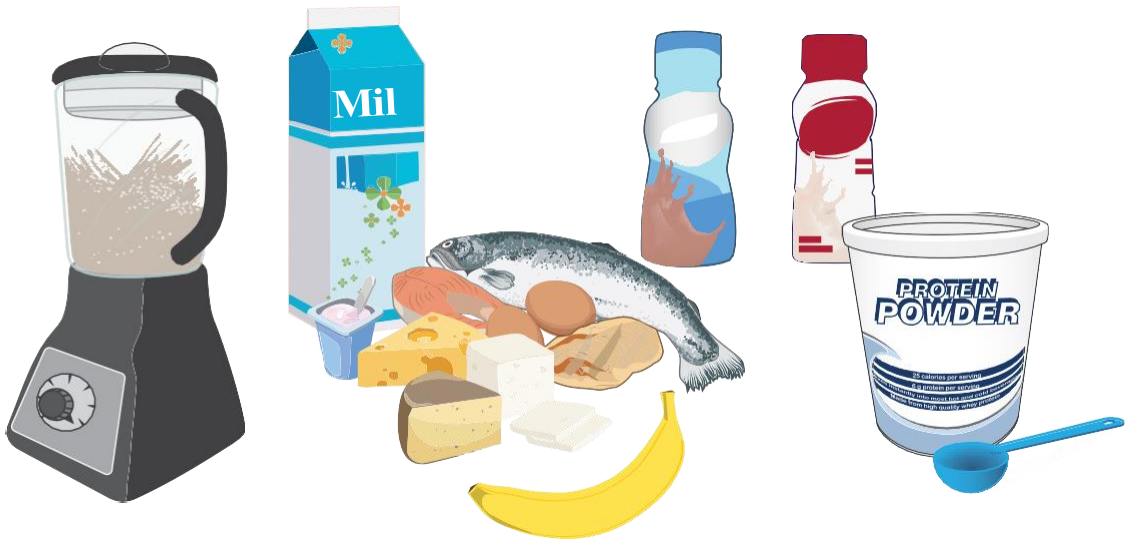
A cancer at the end of the stomach can block food from passing from the stomach to the small intestine. This is called a **gastric blockage**.

When food doesn't pass through the stomach, it does not get absorbed. This can lead to weight loss.

Cancer at the end of the stomach is like a blocked kitchen sink. With a narrow or completely blocked opening, there is less space for food to pass through. Food and fluid can build up and eventually cause vomiting. The stomach bloats which causes pain, nausea and discomfort.



If you have partial gastric blockage (some food can still pass through), your surgeon will refer you to a nutritionist. They will help you pick the foods that are best for you and give you strategies to prevent further weight loss while you go through your cancer treatment.



If the stomach is blocked completely, you may need emergency surgery or other treatment to allow you to eat. Your surgeon will organize this for you.



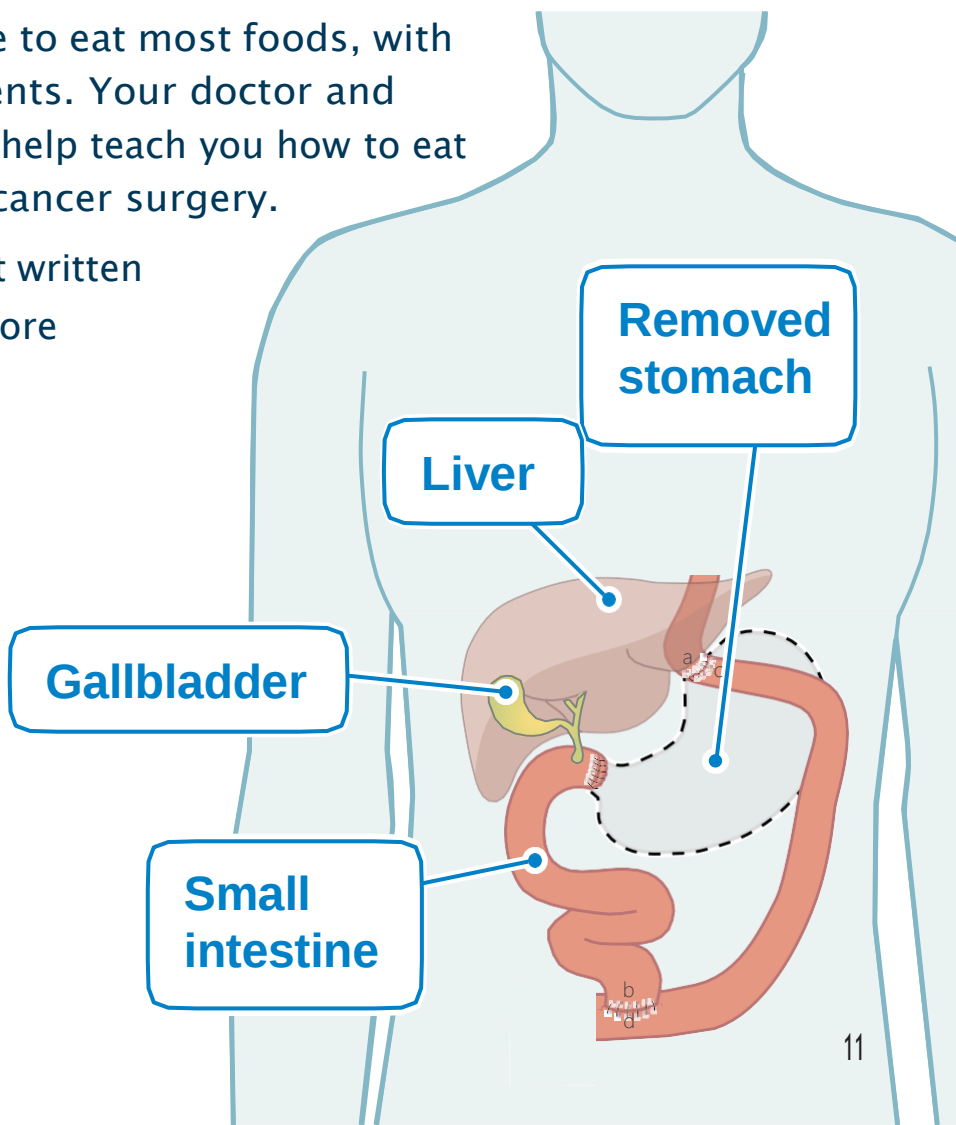
After Surgery :

Minimizing weight loss

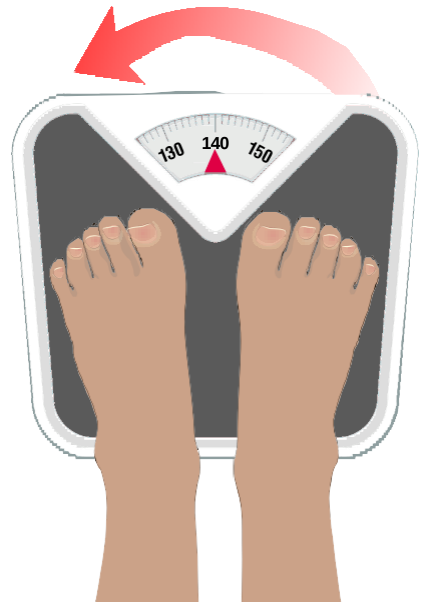
After stomach cancer surgery, part or all of your stomach will be removed and replaced with small intestine.

You will be able to eat most foods, with some adjustments. Your doctor and nutritionist will help teach you how to eat after stomach cancer surgery.

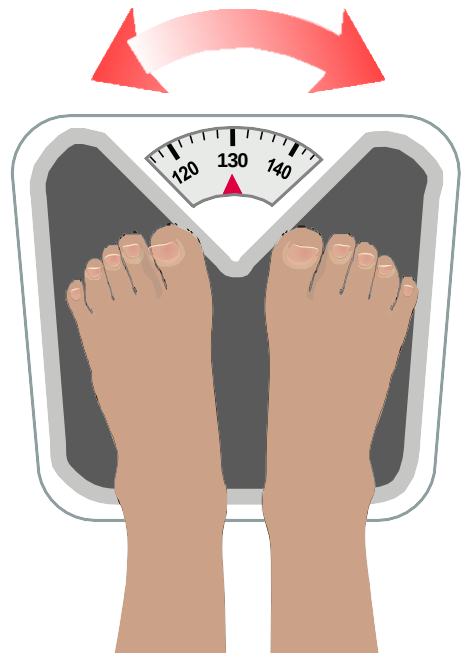
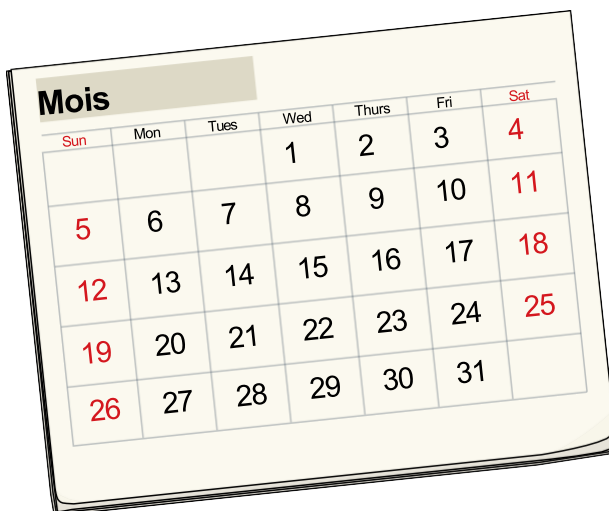
You will also get written instructions before going home.



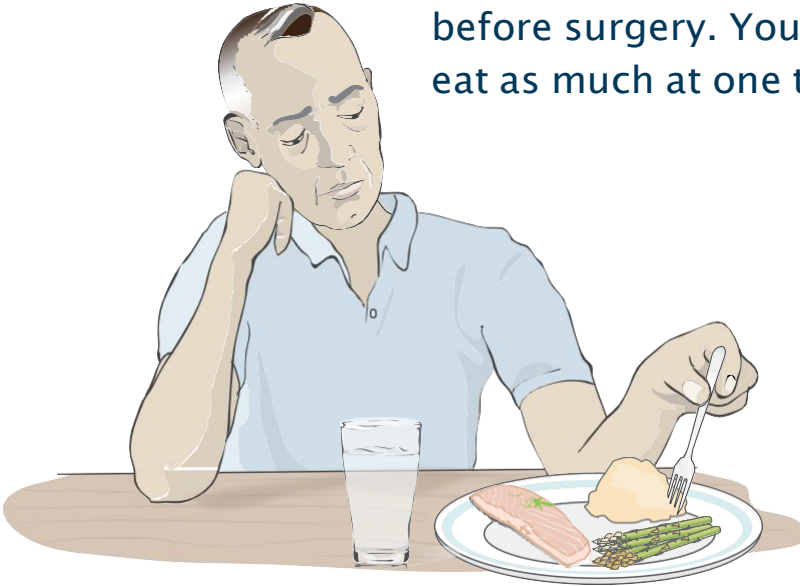
Most patients lose weight during the first month after surgery. This is normal, and can be as much as 10–20 lbs.



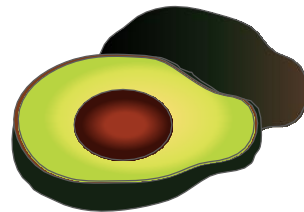
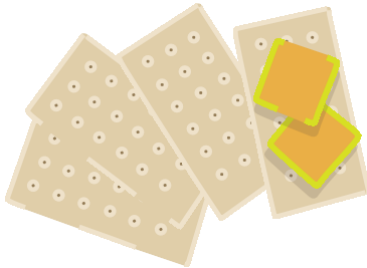
After the first month, this weight loss slows down and your weight should stabilize. Most patients are able to regain some of the weight they lost. Only a few patients gain back all the weight.



After stomach cancer surgery, most people feel full faster than they did before surgery. You will not be able to eat as much at one time as you used to.



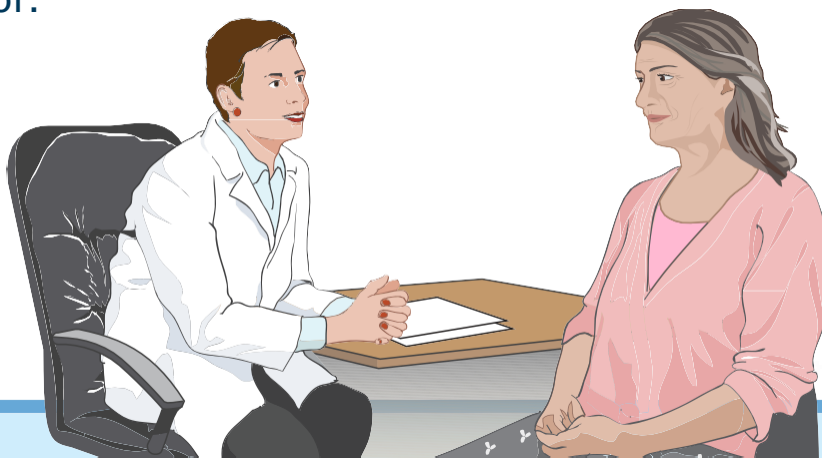
In order to avoid losing too much weight, you will have to be careful to take in enough calories. This means eating small meals many times a day. Try not to go more than 2–3 hours without eating something during the day. Keep high-calorie snacks handy. A few examples include crackers with cheese, avocado or peanut butter.



Be sure to get enough protein in your diet by having some protein at each small meal. This could include ground meat, poultry, eggs, fish, tofu, milk, yogurt, cheese and many other foods. Sometimes, you may need nutritional supplements like fortified drinks, or smoothies with protein to help you get the protein you need. Your nutritionist will help you make sure you are getting enough protein and calories in your diet.



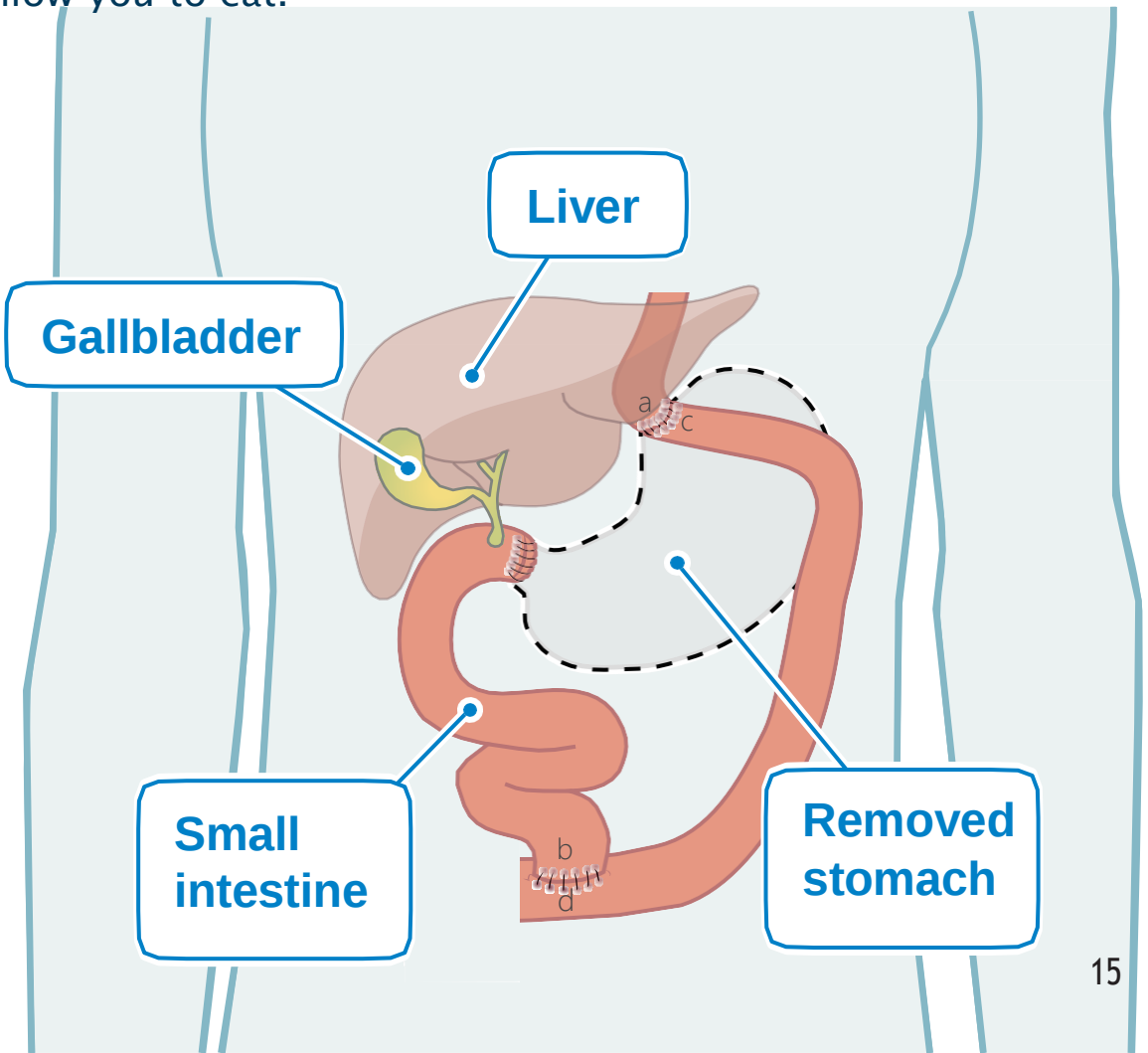
If you feel very weak or worry you are losing too much weight, contact your liaison nurse, nutritionist, or speak to your doctor.



After Surgery :

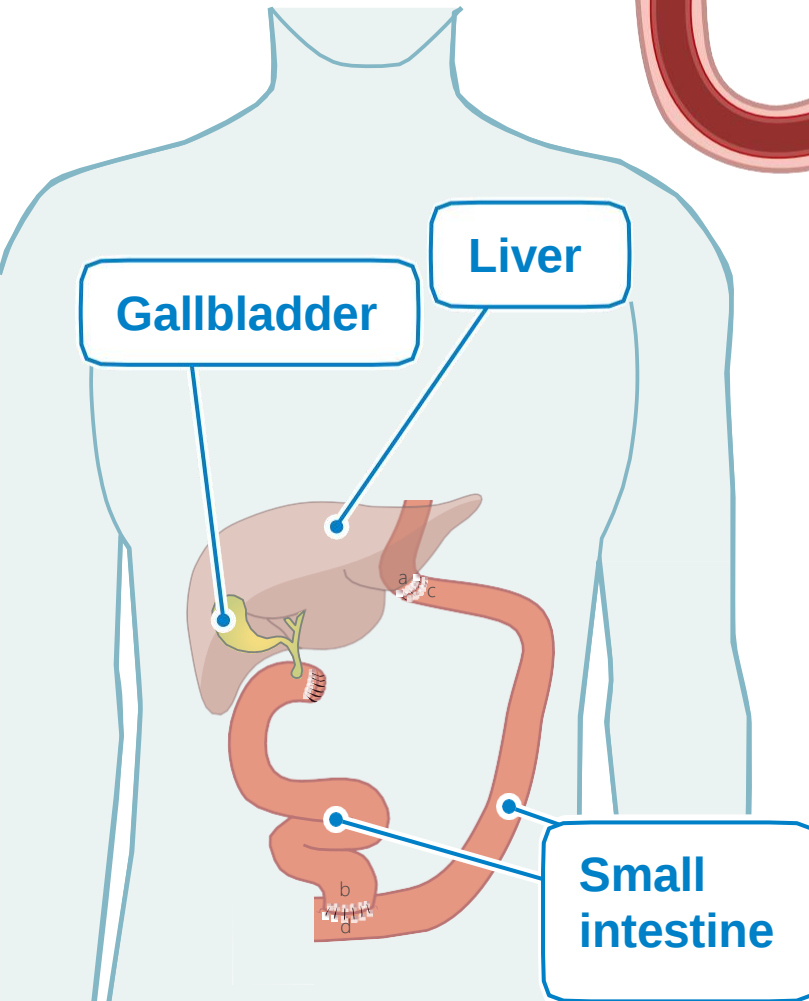
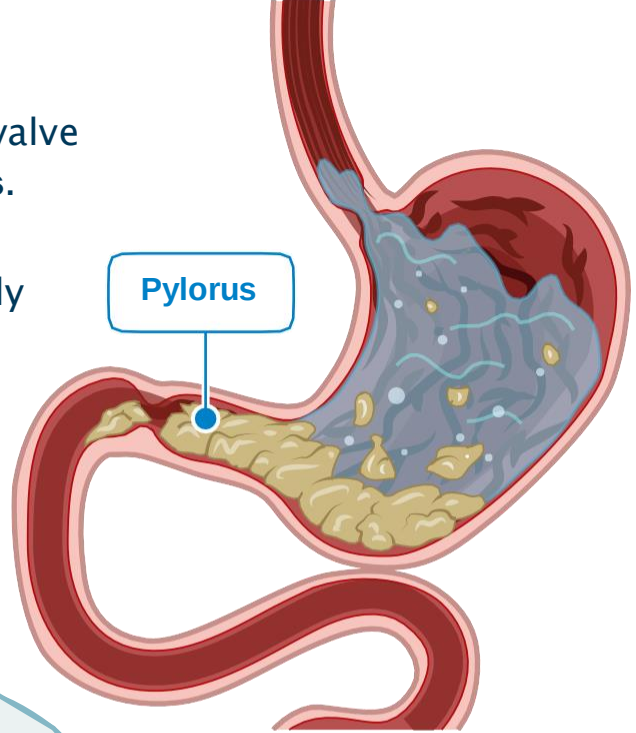
What is dumping syndrome?

Surgery for stomach cancer involves removing all or part of the stomach and replacing it with the small intestine to allow you to eat.



Normally the stomach has a valve at the end called the **pylorus**.

This valve holds food in your stomach and releases it slowly into the small intestine.



Surgery for stomach cancer involves removing the part of the stomach with the valve. As a result, food might move too quickly from the stomach into the **small intestine**.

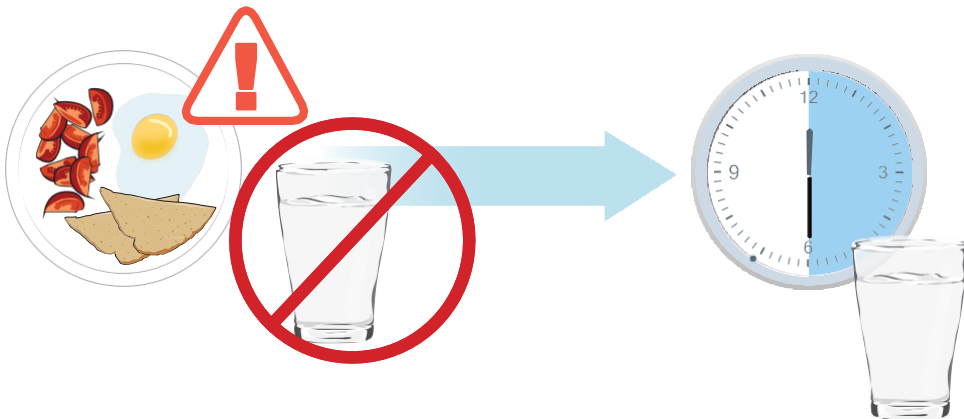
When a lot of food enters the small intestine all at once, you might feel certain unpleasant symptoms such as:

- Cramps
- Flushing
- Palpitations (heart racing)
- Dizziness/weakness
- Diarrhea



These symptoms are called “**dumping syndrome**” and they usually happen immediately after eating or within 1–2 hours.

To prevent dumping syndrome, avoid drinking liquids with your meals. After eating, wait 30–60 minutes before drinking water or other liquids. This will help prevent the food you ate from getting flushed into the small intestine all at once.



Avoiding sugar and sweets such as candy, soda, cakes, pastries, chocolates, soft drinks, sport drinks, jams/jellies etc., can also help avoid dumping syndrome.



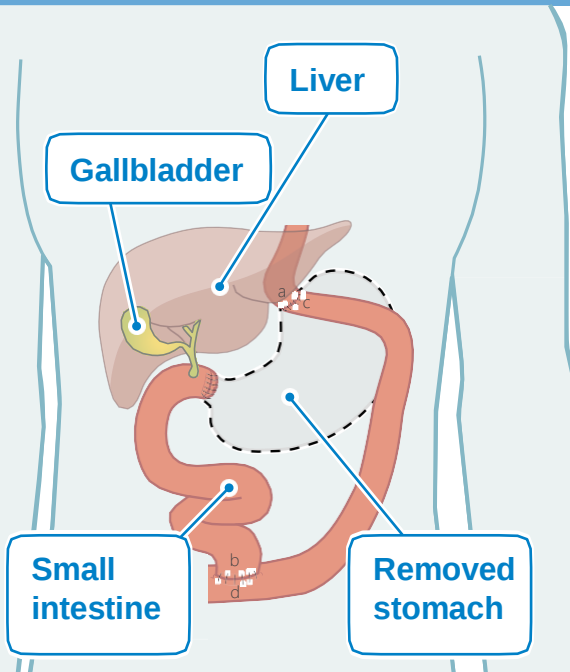
Your nutritionist will give you tips to help avoid dumping syndrome. They will speak to you after your surgery and give you some diet recommendations to follow.

Keep these instructions when you go home. If someone else makes your meals at home, make sure they understand these instructions too.

If you are having problems with dumping syndrome at home you can call your nutritionist to help guide your food choices.

After Surgery :

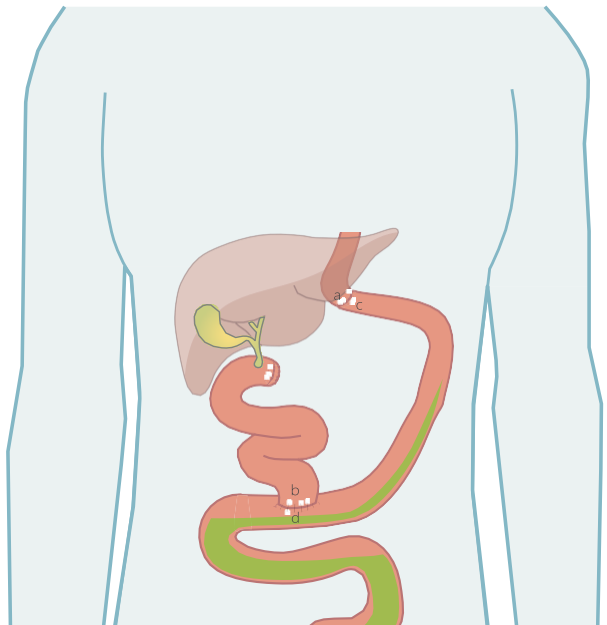
What is bile reflux?



Your surgeon will reconnect your intestines to minimize the amount of bile that can reach the remaining stomach or esophagus. But some bile may still back up (reflux) high enough to cause symptoms.

Surgery for stomach cancer involves removing all or part of the stomach and replacing it with the small intestine to allow you to eat.

The small intestine carries bile. **Bile** helps you digest your food.





Symptoms of bile reflux include:

- A burning feeling
- Bad taste in the mouth
- Vomiting

These symptoms are often worse right after eating and when lying flat.



To prevent bile reflux:

- Eat small meals often
- Avoid lying down right after eating
- Sleep with your head elevated on some pillows
- Avoid tight fitting clothing
- Avoid very spicy food



If bile reflux is very bothersome, medications can sometimes help. Speak to your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms often.

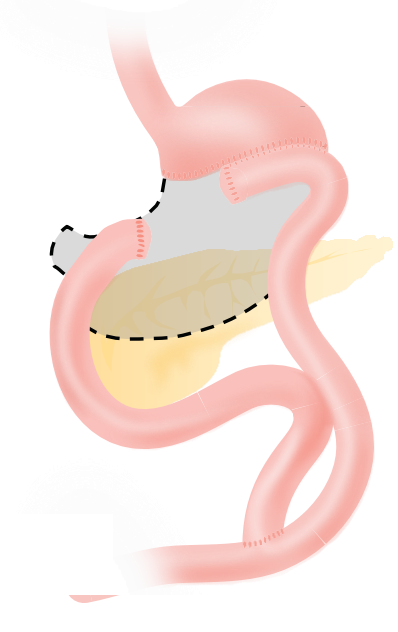
After Surgery :

Recommended foods and diets

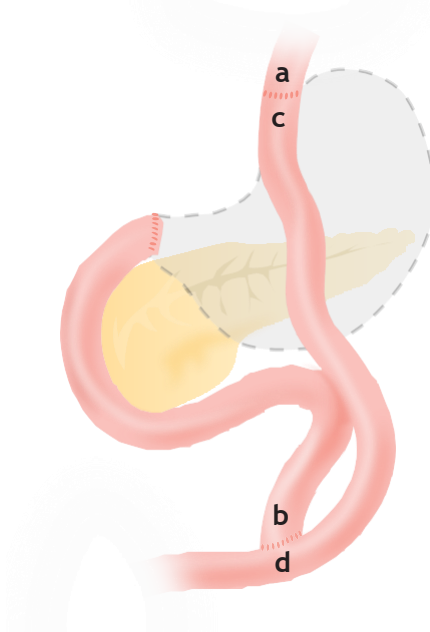
By the time you leave the hospital, you will be eating most normal foods again. However, some diet changes are needed to adjust to your new anatomy.

Early on after surgery, you will not be able to eat much at a time. Your nutritionist will counsel you to eat many small meals throughout the day. It is important to eat regularly even if you do not feel hungry.

Partial gastrectomy



Total gastrectomy



After a **partial (subtotal) gastrectomy**, the remaining stomach can stretch over time. This may take up to a year. You will gradually notice you can eat more at one time than you could right after surgery.

After a **total gastrectomy**, you will only be able to eat small portions. This improves a little bit over time, but in most cases does not change very much. After a total gastrectomy, it is important to remember to eat small meals throughout the day.

At first, try to eat soft foods that are high in calories and rich in protein, healthy fats and nutrients. Some examples are: Greek yogurt, scrambled eggs, soft cheeses, peanut butter, cottage cheese, avocado and soft cooked meats, poultry or fish.



Talk to your nutritionist about any questions you have about your diet after surgery. They will help you choose the right foods to keep you healthy.

Notes and questions

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