

MONTHLY NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Meal Replacements and Bariatric Surgery

If you are preparing for or have had bariatric surgery, one thing your doctor or dietitian might recommend for you is a meal replacement product. Meal replacements are type of food supplement or, in some cases, medical food that are designed to replace a food-based meal. They often come in the form of a shake (powdered or ready to drink) or a bar, but other forms like soups are possible.

Meal replacements differ from products like protein powders in that they have vitamins and minerals and sometimes other ingredients added to them so that nutritionally they can be used in place of a food based meal.

Some Uses of Meal Replacements

Before Surgery

Before surgery you may be asked to use a meal replacement for a couple of different reasons. One possible reason is weight loss. Sometimes your doctor may decide that your surgery would be safer if you lost a bit of weight first, or in some cases an insurance company will ask that you lose weight to qualify for coverage. Meal replacements are frequently part of weight loss programs because they control calories without putting nutrition at risk.

Another common use of meal replacements before surgery is as a short-term (2-6 weeks typically) liquid diet to reduce the size of the liver. With obesity, the liver frequently becomes enlarged. This enlargement may cause surgery to take longer, result in more blood loss, and generally be riskier. Studies have shown that in many cases the use of a short-term low to very low calorie diet right before surgery can shrink the liver and make surgery safer.

After Surgery

There are many reasons a meal replacement might be recommended after surgery. These include:

1. Early post-operative nutrition. In the early weeks and months after bariatric surgery, most people are not eating very many calories. Eating very little food is great for weight loss, but can contribute to nutritional problems. A meal replacement used one or more times daily is sometimes recommended to support nutritional intake.
2. After band adjustments. For those individuals with an adjustable gastric band, there is often swelling a great restriction for a day or two after an adjustment. For this reason, a meal replacement shake might be suggested by your program to help you get adequate nutrition immediately after an adjustment.
3. Getting enough protein. Protein recommendations after bariatric surgery are often in the range of 60 to 90 grams per day. Depending on the type of surgery and what kinds of foods you eat or tolerate, a meal replacement can help you to meet your daily protein needs.
4. Weight plateau or regain. Sometimes if weight loss levels off for too long or if weight regain occurs, your doctor or dietitian might ask you to replace some food with a meal replacement to help support weight loss.

Bariatric Advantage Meal Replacements

There are many kinds of meal replacements on the market, but many are not appropriate for bariatric surgery patients. Often, commercial products are high in sugars or high in calories, things which most bariatric patients are trying to reduce. The Bariatric Advantage High Protein Meal Replacements are designed to meet the specific needs of pre- and postoperative bariatric surgery patients. Our shakes come in 5 delicious flavor options, are protein rich (27 grams of whey protein isolate per serving), low in sugars (less than one gram per serving), and modest in calories (150 -160 per serving). They have been studied in a clinical trial supporting their use to reduce liver volume before surgery and have been successfully enjoyed by thousands of post-operative patients. They are available in economy bags or single-serving options. For more information, talk to your doctor or dietitian, visit us on-line or call us at the number below.



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