

DIET GUIDE: ESOPHAGEAL STENT

A stent is a flexible mesh tube that is placed through the constricted area of your esophagus (food tube/pipe) to allow food and beverages to pass without restriction. The stent gently expands to hold the narrowed area of the esophagus open and should make swallowing foods and beverages easier. The narrowed area may be due to a tumor or stricture. The stent will not be as wide or as flexible as a normal esophagus so you will need to take care with certain foods and in the way you eat to prevent blocking the stent. As the stent expands it can cause some discomfort in the chest area, which normally subsides after 72 hours. Over the counter pain relievers should be sufficient. However, if the pain persists or worsens contact our office at 623-300-9011

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I AVOID?

The stent has been placed to allow you to eat as normally as possible. However, it is possible for the stent to become blocked. The most common reason for stents to block is from food that is swallowed without being sufficiently chewed or from foods that do not break down enough when chewed such as foods high in fiber. The following foods can be difficult to break down, despite chewing, and so are more likely to cause your stent to become blocked: Bread and toast, tough gristly meat, hard boiled or fried egg, Fish with bones/skin, Pithy fruit (e.g., orange, grapefruit, pineapple), stringy vegetables (e.g., green beans, celery, asparagus), potato or apple skins, salad items (e.g., salad leaves and lettuce), raw vegetables, potato and corn chips; Ice cream or yogurt with chunks of fruit, cereal or nuts.

To minimize the risk of blocking the stent, it is important to think about the foods that you are eating. Some foods, when chewed well, will be easier to swallow than others. For example, bread sticks will crumble when chewed but soft bread will form a sticky lump.

HOW CAN I PREVENT BLOCKING THE STENT?

Tips when eating include; Take your time, relax and eat your meals slowly. Minimize distractions. Meals should be smaller than you are used to and more frequent – aim for five or six small meals per day rather than three big meals. Cut your food into smaller pieces than you would normally eat, take small mouthfuls, and chew each mouthful thoroughly. Don't be afraid to spit out lumps that can't be chewed. Have plenty of sauces, gravy, or cream with your meals to increase moisture. This will make food easier to swallow and pass through your stent. Take frequent drinks during and after each meal to help keep your stent clear. Warm or carbonated beverages are recommended, but all fluids are beneficial. For some people, carbonation may worsen symptoms of heartburn or acid reflux. Sit upright at mealtimes and for one to two hours afterwards. If you wear dentures, make sure they fit correctly, so you can chew your food well.

TAKING MEDICATION:

If you have trouble swallowing your medications, ask your primary care doctor if any of your pills are available in liquid form. You can also ask your pharmacist if crushing your pills is an option, as some pills may become less effective when crushed. Pills that can be crushed can be added to applesauce or other soft foods

WHAT IF MY STENT BLOCKS?

If you feel that your stent is blocked, follow these basic guidelines: Do not panic. The blockage only affects the tube into your stomach, and it will not affect your ability to breathe. Stop eating, stand up and take a few sips of a drink. If that does not resolve the problem, try a warm or carbonated beverage. Walk around. If the stent blockage has not cleared after one or two hours contact our office at 623-300-9011 or proceed to the nearest emergency department.