

POST-POEM DIET

POEM stands for “per-oral endoscopic myotomy” and is an incision-less endoscopic procedure to help relieve swallowing issues related to disorders such as achalasia, Zenker’s diverticulum and gastroparesis. To learn more about POEM before your procedure, please visit: www.uclahealth.org/esophageal-center/poem

To allow for maximum healing after POEM, the following post-POEM diet is suggested for the 2 weeks post-procedure when you are home from the hospital. For the reintroduction phase of the diet, that is started after 2 weeks, look to the last page of this handout.

This handout will help you get the calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals you need for healing and overall health while you are unable to eat solid foods. You will stay on this diet until your follow-up appointment with your doctor.

The post-POEM diet includes blenderized and pureed foods. The good news is that you can eat ANY food you want as long as it is liquefied to a smooth consistency in a blender. It is also important to strain your blended food to remove any seeds or clumps, if present. Always clean or sanitize all parts of the blender to decrease your risk of food-borne illness. If you do not have a blender, baby foods (including squeeze pouches/to-go smoothies) may be used.



Cooking and Meal Planning Tips

Make sure all foods blend to a very smooth consistency:

- Cut foods into small pieces and place in a blender or food processor.
- Add liquid (juice, milk/milk substitute, broth/soup, vegetable juice, or gravy) to blender.
- Use equal amounts of food and liquid.
- After blending, if not smooth, strain contents of the blender through a sieve to remove lumps, seeds or chunks.
- If you cannot or do not want to drink the whole portion, refrigerate or freeze leftovers for later (refrigerate for no more than 3 days; freeze for up to 6 months).

Any food can be “blenderized.” Here are examples:

Food Type	How To Thin
Meats, fish, poultry, pork	Blend with broth, water, milk/milk substitute, vegetable juice, tomato sauce, creamy soup, gravy.
Vegetables	Blend with water, tomato juice, broth, strained baby food vegetables.
Starches (potato, pasta, beans)	Blend with soup, broth, milk/milk substitute, water, gravy, strained baby food meats, tofu. Consider using hot cereals (Cream of Wheat/Rice®, grits).
Fruits	Blend with juice, other fruit juices, milk/milk substitute, strained baby food.
Cereals	Prepare with whole milk/milk substitute, juice, commercial protein drink, etc. Use butter or oil in moderation for extra calories.
Mixed dishes	Lasagna, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, chili, stews, hearty soups, chop suey – add adequate liquid of your choice, blend well and strain.

Getting Enough Protein and Calories

- Instead of water, use high calorie drinks (these will provide both calories **AND** fluid) such as 100% juices, whole milk, non-dairy milk substitutes, and liquid meal replacement beverages.
- Fortify beverages with plain, unflavored protein powder, such as pea-based, whey-based, soy-based, or any other protein powder of your choice.
- Fortify milk by adding 2 tablespoons nonfat dry-milk powder to 1 cup of milk (or 1 cup powder to 1 quart milk). Use this as a beverage or in recipes that call for milk.
- Use whole milk, evaporated milk, coconut milk, or silken tofu instead of skim or 2% milk for drinking, or for preparing “cream” soups, custards, puddings, milkshakes, or creamy fruit/vegetable smoothies.
- Prepare custards and puddings with whole eggs/whites or egg substitutes.
- Use smooth yogurts without fruit pieces or seeds. Select yogurts with the highest protein content such as Icelandic or Greek versions. Read nutrition facts labels.
- Prepare homemade shakes with ice cream (dairy/non-dairy) and liquid meal replacements.
- Make smoothies with a yogurt (dairy/non-dairy) of your choice, a scoop of protein powder, a creamy nut butter of choice, a soft fruit without seeds or skin, and avocado (optional).

Sample 1-Day Menu

Breakfast	Mix well in a blender until smooth 1 cup cooked oatmeal 1 cup 2% milk or milk substitute 1 teaspoon cinnamon 1 teaspoon brown sugar 1 teaspoon of coconut oil or coconut milk (optional)
Mid-Morning Snack	Mix well in a blender until smooth “Egg nog” made with 1 cup liquid pasteurized eggs (such as Egg Beaters®) 1 very ripe banana, mashed 1 cup whole milk or milk substitute 1 teaspoon vanilla 1 teaspoon nutmeg
Lunch	Mix well in a blender until smooth 2 cups your choice of cream soup ¼ cup tender-cooked chicken or 2 scoops protein powder of your choice ½ cup mashed potatoes ½ cup cooked vegetables
Mid-Afternoon Snack	12 ounces ready-made liquid supplement
Evening Meal	Mix well in a blender until smooth 1 cup pasta sauce 2 ounces tender-cooked meat or plant-based meat substitute or tofu 1 cup cooked pasta Enough vegetable juice to make the blended food drinkable, if needed
Bedtime Snack	Mix well in blender (or stir well) 2 cups blended ice cream of your choice 1 cup milk or milk substitute

Meal/Snack Ideas During Post-POEM Diet

- Mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes
- Mashed squash, turnips or rutabaga
- Mashed cauliflower (boil until soft, then mash or blend with olive oil)
- Creamed spinach (pureed/blended)
- Cornmeal mush (pureed/blended)
- Millet mush (boil well, drain and mash with some leftover cooking liquid)
- Cream of Wheat/Rice® or oats (available in baby food aisle)
- Hummus (cooked chickpea/garbanzo bean dip)
- Mashed avocado or guacamole dip (no hard/firm chunks)
- Ricotta cheese
- All yogurts (dairy and non-dairy substitute versions) without soft chunks
- Labneh (Middle Eastern yogurt dip)
- Smooth nut butters (peanut, almond, cashew, macadamia, pecan, walnut, hazelnut) and or coconut butter spread - mixed or blended into food
- Any smooth, cream soups
- Any broth soups blended with very well-cooked vegetables or very soft stewed meat (no beef)
- Mousse or flan
- Tiramisu
- Crème brulee (without crispy top)
- Ice cream
- Chicken, tuna or egg salad (blended well with mayonnaise, without crunchy vegetables)

Reintroduction Phase

If you have been on the post-POEM diet for the past 2 weeks AND you have been tolerating the diet well without symptoms, it is time to slowly get you back to a regular diet.

- Bring back 1 new food from the “FIRST TO REINTRODUCE” list daily; start with small amounts (2 tablespoons - 1/4 cup) in the morning and if well-tolerated, double the dose later in the day. If no symptoms occur, this food is back in the diet and you can move on to a new food from the “FIRST TO REINTRODUCE” the next day.
- Once all foods from the “FIRST TO REINTRODUCE” list are safely back in the diet, it is okay to move to the “SECOND TO REINTRODUCE” in the same manner as described above.
- Once all foods from the “SECOND TO REINTRODUCE” list are safely back in the diet, begin to reintroduce the “LAST TO REINTRODUCE” in the same manner as described above.
- If at any time you have symptoms, stop reintroducing foods and contact your doctor or dietitian.

FIRST to REINTRODUCE	SECOND to REINTRODUCE	LAST to REINTRODUCE
Chicken ground or breast unblended with gravy	Moist rotisserie chicken	Crispy fried chicken
Oatmeal Grits Soft polenta (liquidy)	Soft, moist cakes Soft tortillas	Crusty bread such as baguette Tortilla chips Potato chips
Unblended tuna or egg salad without chunks of raw onion or celery Tuna tartare - no seeds/chips	Fish, meats and pork unblended including soft stews or braised meat	Grisly cuts of meat such as top round and chuck
Soft cooked vegetables	Iceberg or Bibb lettuce	Raw veggies: celery, kale Fried veggie crisps
Soft fruits such as melon, ripe banana, and avocado	Raw, ripe tomatoes Ripe berries Stewed prunes	Apples, citrus, dried fruit such as raisins
Smooth peanut butter (or almond/sunflower butter) and jelly sandwich	Crunchy peanut butter and jelly sandwich	Whole peanuts, tree nuts and seeds: pecans, almonds and sunflower seeds
Cottage cheese	Brie, Camembert, cream cheese	Cheddar, mozzarella, feta, parmesan, Havarti cheese
Baba ganoush (roasted and smashed eggplant dip)	Eggplant parmesan (without skin of the eggplant)	Pizza Mozzarella sticks
Tzatziki, if very small pieces of softened cucumber (Greek yogurt dip)	Hummus with chunks	Beans Polenta (firm/sliced)
Matboucha (Israeli/Moroccan tomato, bell pepper dip)	Adjvar (red pepper, eggplant, onion spread)	Shakshuka (poached eggs in tomato sauce with peppers)