The First Day or Two

How long does anesthesia last?

Most effects of general anesthesia fade within about 24 hours. Some people may feel sleepy or nauseated into the next day (24–48 hours). Pain medicine may affect the stomach and bowels longer.

Why digestion changes

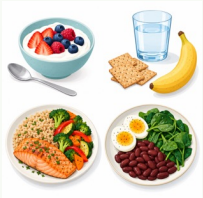
Anesthesia can cause early nausea. Opioid pain medicine can cause nausea and constipation. Eating less, drinking less, and moving less may add to it.

What can help you feel better?

Once your team says it is safe to eat, start with small sips and simple foods such as toast, crackers, banana, rice, or broth. Add usual meals as you feel ready.

Does food wear off anesthesia?

No food clears anesthesia faster. Your body clears the medicine over time. Food and fluids help you feel better and support recovery.



Call your care team if you keep vomiting, cannot keep fluids down, or have worsening pain.

Will Probiotics Help?

Antibiotics and gut bacteria

You likely received an antibiotic during surgery. Antibiotics kill bacteria, including some helpful bacteria in the gut. Probiotics or yogurt with live cultures may be beneficial during recovery.

How often?

You may choose yogurt with live cultures with meals if you tolerate it. Ask your surgeon or pharmacist whether a probiotic supplement is right for you, especially if you are taking antibiotics.

For constipation

Drink water as allowed, add fruit and fiber-rich foods gradually, and walk as your physical therapist advises. Follow the bowel plan from your surgical team.

Before taking a supplement

If your immune system is weakened, ask your surgeon first. Follow the bowel plan your surgical team gave you.

Probiotic effects vary by product and person.

PATIENT NUTRITION GUIDE

Food Tips After Surgery

Simple meals to help you heal
and take part in Physical Therapy



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Follow your surgeon's specific instructions.

Knee Replacement Example

Breakfast

Eggs, oatmeal, and berries.

Lunch

Chicken or tofu sandwich with fruit.

Dinner

Fish or beans, rice, and cooked vegetables.

PT tip

Keep a protein snack handy for therapy days, such as yogurt, cheese, or hummus.

Hip Replacement Example

Breakfast

Greek yogurt or fortified soy yogurt, toast, and fruit.

Lunch

Lentil soup with turkey, or a hummus sandwich.

Dinner

Chicken or tofu, sweet potato, and vegetables.

PT tip

Place water and easy snacks within safe reach to avoid unnecessary bending.

Protein and water help after any surgery.

Drink as allowed by your care team.
Adjust meals for allergies and medical diets.

Sources: PubMed 40317042, 30041540, 25846222, 32958481; NIH ODS Probiotics.

Shoulder Replacement Example

Breakfast

Scrambled eggs, whole-grain toast, and berries.

Lunch

Tuna or chickpea sandwich with fruit.

Dinner

Chicken or tofu, quinoa or rice, and vegetables.

PT tip

Choose easy one-handed foods or ask for help preparing meals while your arm heals.