

Post-Op Recovery Guide - (Hiatal Hernia Repair)

Diet (The Most Critical Part)

- **Stages:** You will progress from clear liquids to a full liquid diet, then to a pureed/soft diet over 4–6 weeks.
- **Small Portions:** Eat 6 to 8 small meals a day instead of 3 large ones.
- **Eat Slowly:** Spend at least 30 minutes on each meal.
- **Chew Thoroughly:** Chew every bite until it is a liquid consistency before swallowing.
- **Post-Meal Habits:** Stay upright for at least 30 to 60 minutes after eating; never lie down immediately after a meal.

What to Avoid

- **Carbonation:** Avoid soda, sparkling water, and beer for at least 6 weeks, as the bubbles cause painful bloating.
- **Straws & Gum:** Do not use straws or chew gum, as these cause you to swallow excess air.
- **Sticky Foods:** Avoid bread, peanut butter, and tough meats for the first month, as these are the most common foods to get stuck.
- **Large Pills:** Do not swallow large tablets whole for the first 2 weeks. Check with your doctor about crushing them or using liquid versions.

Sample Daily Menu (Full Liquid Stage)

This stage usually begins a few days after surgery.

- **Breakfast:** *Strained oatmeal (very thin) or a protein shake.*
- **Mid-Morning Snack:** *Greek yogurt (no fruit chunks) or a fruit smoothie (strained).*
- **Lunch:** *Cream of chicken or tomato soup (blended until completely smooth).*
- **Afternoon Snack:** *Sugar-free pudding or a milk alternative.*
- **Dinner:** *Blended vegetable broth or a meal replacement shake.*
- **Evening:** *Herbal tea (lukewarm, not hot).*

Activity

- **Walking:** Walk 3–4 times daily starting the day of surgery to prevent blood clots and help with gas pain.
- **Lifting Limits:** Do not lift anything heavier than 10–15 pounds for the first 4 weeks.
- **Stairs:** You may use stairs immediately, but move slowly and stop if you feel exhausted.
- **Core Strain:** Avoid activities that contract your stomach muscles, such as sit-ups, pulling, or pushing, for at least 6 weeks.
- **Driving:** Do not drive until you are off all narcotic pain medications and have had your follow-up visit.

Pain Control

- **Medication:** Take pain relief on a regular schedule for the first few days rather than waiting for the pain to become severe.
- **Shoulder Pain:** You may feel pain in your shoulder from the gas used during surgery. Walking is the best way to relieve this.
- **Pill Safety:** For the first 2 weeks, do **not** swallow large pills whole. Most medications should be crushed or taken in liquid form (check with your pharmacist first).
- **Ice:** Use cold packs on your incisions 3–4 times daily for 20 minutes to reduce swelling.

Wound Care & Showering

- **Showering:** You may shower within 24 hours after surgery. Let water run over the incisions; do not scrub.
- **No Soaking:** Do not submerge in baths, pools, or hot tubs for at least 2 weeks or until incisions are fully healed.
- **Dressings:** Do not peel off surgical glue or white tapes (Steri-strips). They will fall off on their own in 1–2 weeks.
- **Bruising:** It is normal and common to see black and blue discoloration around the incisions.

When to Call for Help

Call the Clinic (661-219-2643) if you have:

- Fever over 100.4°F.
- Persistent nausea, vomiting, or retching.
- Severe difficulty swallowing or food feeling "stuck".
- Increasing redness, warmth, or pus-like drainage from incisions.

Call 911 or go to the ER for:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath.
- Severe abdominal pain that medication does not help.
- Loss of consciousness.

Follow-Up: Schedule your post-operative visit for approximately 2 weeks after surgery.