

Gallbladder Removal Diet: What to Eat and What to Skip

How should my diet change after gallbladder removal?

Your gallbladder is a 4-inch-long, oval-shaped organ connected to your liver. It concentrates bile from your liver and releases it into your small intestine to help break down food.

If your gallbladder becomes infected or develops stones, it may need to be removed. This procedure is known as cholecystectomy.

With your gallbladder, bile flows freely into your small intestine, where it can't break down food as effectively as it did in your gallbladder. While you can live without your gallbladder, you might need to make some changes to your diet to make up this change.

For the most part, you'll need to limit or avoid high-fat, oily, greasy, and processed foods, which are harder for your body to digest. You may not need to make these changes forever. In the months after the procedure, you'll probably be able to slowly add some of these foods back into your diet. Read on to learn exactly what you should eat, what you should look out for, and what else you can do to speed up your recovery from gallbladder removal surgery.

What foods should I avoid?

There's no standard diet that people should follow after gallbladder removal surgery. In general, it's best to avoid fatty, greasy, processed, and sugary foods.

Eating these foods after having your gallbladder removed won't cause serious health problems, but it can lead to a lot of painful gas, bloating, and diarrhea. This is partly because bile flowing freely into your intestine works like a laxative.

Fatty meats

Meats that are processed or high in fat can wreak havoc on your digestive system following removal of your gallbladder.

Such meats include:

- steak or high-fat cuts of red meat
- beef, whole or ground
- pork
- bacon
- lunch meats, such as bologna and salami
- sausage
- lamb

Dairy products

Dairy can also be hard for your body to digest as it adjusts without a gallbladder.

Try to avoid or limit your consumption of:

- milk, especially whole
- full-fat yogurt
- full-fat cheese
- butter
- lard
- sour cream
- ice cream
- whipped cream
- sauces or gravies made with cream

If cutting out dairy isn't realistic for you, try to choose fat-free yogurt and low-fat cheese options or versions that contain dairy alternatives, such as almond milk.

Processed foods

Processed foods often contain a lot of additional fat and sugar. This makes them last longer, but they're also hard to digest and don't offer much nutrition.

Try to stay away from:

- pie
- cake
- cookies
- cinnamon rolls
- sugary cereals
- white or other processed breads
- foods cooked in vegetable or hydrogenated oils

Caffeine and alcohol

Caffeine contains acids that can cause your stomach to make more acid and drain faster. This can lead to stomach pain and discomfort after having gallbladder removed.

Limit or avoid these caffeinated foods and beverages:

- coffee
- tea
- soda
- energy drinks
- snacks with caffeine, such as energy bars or coffee-flavored desserts
- chocolate

What foods should I eat?

While it's best to avoid certain foods when you don't have a gallbladder, there are still plenty of things you can and should eat.

High-fiber foods

Fiber can improve digestion in the absence of concentrated bile. Just ramp up your intake slowly so you don't overdo it right after surgery, as it can also cause gas.

The following are healthy sources of fiber and many other nutrients, such as calcium, B vitamins, and omega-3 fatty acids:

- beans
- lentils
- peas
- potatoes with skin
- oats
- barley
- whole grain bread, pasta, rice, and cereal
- raw nuts (not roasted in oils), such as almonds, walnuts, and cashews
- raw seeds, such as hemp, chia, and poppy seeds
- sprouted grains, nuts, and seeds
- fruits and vegetables

Nutrient-dense, vitamin-dense fruits and veggies

Since you'll be recovering from surgery and needing more fiber, try to incorporate as many nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables into your diet as possible.

The following foods are good sources of antioxidant vitamin A, fiber, immune-boosting vitamin C, and many phytonutrients to assist your body in recovery:

- legumes, such as peas, lentils, or beans
- cauliflower
- cabbage
- Brussels sprouts
- broccoli
- spinach

- kale
- tomatoes
- citrus, such as oranges and limes
- avocados
- blueberries
- blackberries
- raspberries

Lean meats or meat alternatives

If you're used to eating a lot of meat, a gallbladder removal diet can seem intimidating. But you don't have to cut out all meat. Just opt for leaner meats or plant proteins, such as:

- chicken breast
- turkey
- salmon
- trout
- herring
- white fish like cod and halibut
- legumes
- tofu

Healthy fats and low-fat, fat-free foods

Try to avoid heavy oils, especially when cooking. Swap vegetable oil for avocado, olive, or coconut oil. These have more good fats than other cooking oils. Still, you should try to limit your intake of oils.

You can also try low-fat versions of food you might need to avoid for a while, such as:

- mayonnaise
- milk
- yogurt
- sour cream
- ice cream

Are there any other diet tips?

Making some slight adjustments to your diet after having your gallbladder removed will go a long way in making your recovery smoother.

In addition to swapping certain foods for others, you can also try these tips:

- **Don't start with solid foods right away after surgery.** Slowly introduce solid foods back into your diet to prevent any digestive issues.
- **Eat small meals throughout the day.** Having large amounts of food at once can cause gas and bloating, so split up your meals. Try eating five to six small meals a day that are a few hours apart. Snack on nutrient-dense, low-fat, high-protein foods in between meals. Try not to eat more than 3 grams of fat in a single meal.
- **Substitute basic ingredients in recipes.** For example, use applesauce instead of butter when you bake, or make an egg substitute using flax seeds and water.
- **Consider following a vegetarian diet.** Meats and dairy, especially full-fat versions, are often harder to digest without a gallbladder.
- **Stay fit.** Exercising regularly and keeping yourself at a healthy weight can help with digestion.

The bottom line

Having your gallbladder removed usually isn't as serious as it sounds. But you'll probably want to make a few adjustments to your diet to avoid digestion issues while you recover. Remember, you'll likely only need to for a few weeks or months after the procedure.

But if you're looking to improve your overall health, consider sticking with it. The dietary changes recommended after gallbladder removal such as adding fiber and healthy fats are helpful for most people with or without a gallbladder. It'll also reduce your risk for future digestive issues due to not having a gallbladder.

Last medically reviewed on January 2, 2019

<https://www.healthline.com/health/gallbladder-removal-diet#takeaway>