



# Fox Valley Surgical ASSOCIATES

Dr. Peter Janu, FACS  
General and Laparoendoscopic Surgery  
Fox Valley Surgical Associates  
1818 N. Meade Street Suite 240 West  
Appleton, WI 54911  
920-731-8131

## **At Home After LINX Surgery – Diet**

### **Eating After A LINX Esophageal Surgery**

After your esophageal surgery, you can expect some difficulty swallowing, especially around weeks 2-4. If food sticks when you eat, it is called “dysphagia.” This is due to scar tissue forming around your surgery site and device implant and should get resolved over time.

### **Advancing Your Diet: The Post LINX Diet Progression**

#### **Day of Surgery: Soft Foods**

A soft diet is recommended only for the day of LINX placement – you should be able to get back to a regular diet the day after. The initial soft food diet allows you to ease into solid foods. In general, a soft diet is “anything you can squish through your fingers,” but may include slippery noodles, white fish and soft, cooked vegetables as long as you chew them well. You will be asked to take it slow – with small bites and chew well. Avoid rice, bread, pasta and lettuce - they tend to be harder to swallow.

#### **Weeks 1-2**

The first 1 to 2 weeks are often called the “honeymoon” stage. Many patients report food going down relatively well, and acid at a minimum, if any.

During this time, you should:

- Take small bites of food
- Chew food very well
- Eat frequent meals (4-7 small meals a day, or a small snacks every 1-2 hours)
- Minimize the amount of dry food intake (i.e., chips, hard bread, crackers)
- Take a few sips of a liquid before eating and in between bites of food

#### **Weeks 3–8**

This is the time when scar tissue will form and become more dense and stiff, which is a good thing. It is your body's way of healing. The scar tissue forms a capsule around the device, preventing it from sliding up or down. In addition, any repair of a hiatal hernia will be becoming stronger and tighter as well.

You may experience some difficulty swallowing, increased belching or occasional chest pain (caused by the spasms of the esophagus). This pain is sometimes described as “sharp” or “stabbing” but does not last long. These are all known and expected symptoms. If you feel food gets caught, try to avoid flushing it down with liquid as this will back up further and lead to regurgitation and vomiting. It is typically best to walk around and be patient and allow it to pass on its own. Warm temperatures help things go down easier than cold. You should continue eating frequently, as eating often alleviates these symptoms. If you experience food “sticking” or difficulty swallowing, drinking warm tea or other warm liquids will help by relaxing the esophagus. Experiment with your food, everyone is different. If you find something that works for you, go for it.

To prevent the LINX device from scarring into a fixed or closed position, “physical therapy” will be required – which is eating. By eating you are exercising the device and stretching and relaxing the scar tissue. Similar to knee surgery, constant movement will allow the device to stay mobile. Eating small meals frequently (5-7 small meals a day, or a small snacks every 1-2 hours), forces your esophagus to push things through the new valve frequently. Constant movement will allow the device to stay mobile and prevent long-term problems with swallowing. Every time you swallow a bite of food, the device opens and closes, which stretches out the scar tissue. This results in optimum healing.

### **General Rules:**

For optimal healing, your care team may recommend some simple rules, including:

- Eat slowly and take small bites. It may also help to eat only one food at a time.
  - Every hour or two that you are awake, try taking 1-2 tablespoons of yogurt, pudding, or applesauce.
  - Avoid taking large amounts of liquids as this may cause tightness or discomfort. Stay hydrated by drinking small amounts of fluids throughout the day.
  - Maintain an upright position (as near 90 degrees) whenever eating or drinking, and for 30-45 minutes after each meal.
  - Avoid talking while eating, and try and eat in a relaxed atmosphere with no distractions
  - Avoid eating bread, crust, pasta, rice or pizza for the first 3 weeks following surgery.
  - If you choose to eat meats like steak, chicken, or any other tough foods moisten them with liquids or sauces.
  - Do not mix solid foods and liquids in the same mouthful, and do not “wash down” foods with liquids, unless instructed to do so by your surgeon. If you do feel that your meal is a bit “sticky,” a small amount of warm liquid may help.
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- Avoid carbonated drinks; they will make you feel bloated.
  - You may experience a sensation similar to heartburn. This is usually not true reflux, but what most likely is happening is that fluids are pooling above the LINX device. This can cause an irritation of the lining of the esophagus. Try eating a saltine cracker or similar to soak up this fluid.

Find what foods work best for you, experiment with food options and eat small, healthy meals to strengthen the esophageal sphincter and prevent scar tissue from immobilizing the LINX device.