

Pre-Op Very Low Energy Diet (VLED)

Diet before bariatric surgery

This resource is for patients undergoing bariatric surgery. This sheet explains the **preoperative (pre-op) diet stage** before your surgery.

What is the pre-op diet stage?

- You will begin the pre-op diet stage about **2-4 weeks** before surgery. Your bariatric surgery healthcare team will tell you when you need to start this diet.
- This stage involves following a Very Low Energy Diet (VLED). VLED may also be called a VLCD (very low-calorie diet).
- The most common VLED product recommended is Optifast®. Other suitable products may include KicStart® and Formulite®. Your bariatric surgery healthcare team may recommend an alternative product. This will be based on any pre-existing medical conditions you may have.
- Strictly follow the instructions for taking your VLED. If you do not follow the pre-op diet stage correctly, the size of your liver may not reduce, and your surgery may be cancelled.

My VLED plan:

Your recommended VLED product is: _____

Start Date: _____

Duration: _____

Weight first day of VLED: _____ kg

Additional Protein: _____ g

Notes: _____

What is a VLED meal replacement plan?

- In the pre-op diet stage, VLED meal replacement products are used as a total meal replacement program.
- A very low energy diet provides approximately 2400kJ (600kcal) a day. They also provide **all the vitamins and minerals your body needs**.
- A multivitamin is usually not needed before surgery - unless you are already prescribed a vitamin supplement by your doctor.

How do they work?

- VLED meal replacement products are very low in carbohydrates, which will cause your body to go into mild ketosis.
- During ketosis, the body switches from using carbohydrates as the main source of energy, to using your body fat.
- Ketosis will assist to reduce the size of your liver. This will allow your surgeon to better access your stomach.
- This means it is extremely **important to follow the plan**. Do not include any extra carbohydrates (e.g. breads, grains, cereals, fruit, dairy foods like milk or yoghurt or sugars) which can stop the ketosis process.
- A VLED meal replacement plan will assist with reducing your body weight and improving your nutrition before surgery.

How much VLED should I have?

- In the pre-op diet stage you need to have **three (3)** VLED meal replacement products each day.
- These can include any combination of VLED shakes, soups, bars or desserts.
- Mix sachets with at least 200ml water (add more water if desired).

What other foods and fluids can I have?

Every day you need to have **three (3)** VLED products, plus:

- + at least 2 cups of vegetables from the allowed list on page 5.
- + 1 teaspoon oil
- + 2L water
- +/- extra protein, **ONLY** if recommended by your Dietitian.

Your bariatric surgery healthcare team will tell you if you need to stop having the 2 cups of vegetables in the week immediately prior to your surgery: _____

Protein Serve

If your Dietitian has recommended extra protein, please **choose one option, once per day**:

- 100g [raw weight] meat/chicken/fish (unprocessed with no crumbs or batter), or
- 2 eggs, or
- 100g tin of tuna or salmon in spring water, or
- 100g tofu

Common challenges

During the first 3 days of this diet, you may experience some of the following symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Hunger
- Nausea
- Poor concentration
- Dizziness / light-headedness
- Headaches
- Diarrhoea

Ensure you continue to follow the VLED plan and drink plenty of fluids during this time.
After 3-4 days your body should adapt, and you should feel much better.

Some common medications (e.g. for diabetes or blood pressure) may need to be adjusted by your GP or bariatric surgery healthcare team before you start the VLED and during the pre-op diet stage.






If you have diabetes please check your blood glucose levels more frequently than usual whilst on the VLED and advise your GP or bariatric surgery healthcare team if your BGL's are <4mmol/L or >10mmol/L.

You should treat a low blood glucose level (hypo) as you usually would.

Bowel habits and stool changes

- This diet can change how often you need to go to the toilet. You might experience diarrhoea (loose stools) or constipation (hard stools that are difficult to pass).
- If you experience constipation, ensure you are eating **2 cups of vegetables and drinking 2 litres of water each day** unless you have been advised differently.
- If needed, add extra fibre supplements (such as Benefibre mixed in water) to your diet. Fibre supplements are available from your chemist.
- If you have diarrhoea or are usually lactose intolerant, let your bariatric surgery healthcare team know. There may be extra strategies to help (e.g lacteeze to aid digestion of lactose or swapping to a low lactose VLED product).

Please choose from the allowed column:

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods NOT Allowed
Grains 	No foods from this food group are allowed	
Fruit 	No foods from this food group are allowed, including avocado	
Vegetables <i>Aim for at least 2 cups/day</i>	Alfalfa sprouts, asparagus, bean sprouts, bok choy, beetroot (30-40g) bamboo shoots, broccoli, broccolini, brussel sprouts, cabbage, capsicum, carrot (30-40g), cauliflower, celery, cucumber, eggplant, green beans, kale, leek, lettuce, mushrooms, onion, radish, shallots, silver beet, snow peas, spinach, squash, tomato, watercress, zucchini	No other vegetables allowed, only eat vegetables on the allowed list
Meat and meat alternatives 	Only include if your Dietitian or bariatric surgery healthcare team tells you to	
Dairy	Only 30ml skim milk per day in tea/coffee	Do not have any other dairy e.g. full cream milk, yoghurt, cheese or other dairy desserts
Soups	Stock cubes, Miso Soup, Bonox™ Soup made from allowed vegetable list	Only eat soups on the allowed list
Sauces/Condiments 	In moderation (2-3 teaspoon per day) of: Fat free or diet salad dressings, lemon juice, lime juice, mustard, soy sauce, Tabasco, vinegar, tomato paste	Creamy sauces/dressings, even if 'fat free' e.g. fat free mayonnaise. Only have sauces/condiments from allowed list
Herbs and Spices	All herbs and spices, garlic, chilli, ginger, salt and pepper	
Fluids <i>Aim for at least 2 litres of fluids/day</i> 	Water (<i>this is the preferred fluid</i>), plain mineral water or soda water, diet cordial, tea or coffee (no sugar and maximum 30ml skim milk/day), herbal teas, diet/ sugar-free soft drink (use sparingly)	Do not have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol • Cordial • Juice • Soft drink • Sports drinks • Milk

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods NOT Allowed
Other	Artificial Sweeteners, diet jelly (1/2 cup)	Do not have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honey • Sugar • Syrups

Take home messages

- 2-4 weeks before your surgery you will begin a Very Low Energy Diet (VLED).
- This will reduce the size of your liver to help the surgeon get access to your stomach during surgery.
- Everyday have:
 - 3 VLED products
 - 2 cups of vegetables from allowed list
 - 1 teaspoon of oil
 - 2L of water
 - extra protein, **ONLY** if recommended by your Dietitian.

Sample Meal Plans

These are sample meal plans to show you what your diet may look like in the pre-op stage.

Sample Meal Plan 1:

Breakfast	Morning Tea	Lunch	Afternoon Tea	Dinner	Supper
VLED Shake	1 cup herbal tea + Water	VLED Soup + 1 cup salad from allowed vegetable list with diet dressing + Water	Miso soup with ginger, garlic, soy sauce, 1 tsp oil + Water	VLED Shake + 1 cup stir-fried vegetables from allowed vegetable list	Diet jelly (1/2 cup)

Sample meal plan 2

Breakfast	Morning Tea	Lunch	Afternoon Tea	Dinner	Supper
VLED Bar	1 cup tea w/ 30ml skim milk + Water	VLED Shake + 1 cup salad from allowed vegetable list with diet dressing + Water	Vegetable stock soup + 1 cup cooked vegetables (onion, carrot, celery, crushed tomatoes), 1 tsp oil	VLED Dessert	Diet jelly (1/2 cup)

Your example meal plan:

Breakfast	Morning Tea	Lunch	Afternoon Tea	Dinner	Supper

Support

Sign up to the Optifast® Website for free access to the community forum, support tools, meal planner, recipe inspiration, weight loss progress and meal tracking.

www.optifast.com.au

For further information contact your Dietitian or bariatric surgery healthcare team:_____