

Ten Important Rules for Living with the LAP-BAND System

Rule 1 *Eat only when you are hungry, and no more than three small meals a day.*

Your new small stomach can hold only about one-fourth of a cup of food. If you try to eat more than this at one time, you may become nauseated or vomit. If you routinely eat too much, the small stomach pouch may stretch. Frequent vomiting will cancel the effect of the operation and can also cause certain complications, such as stomach slippage. To avoid this, you need to learn to listen to your body and stick to your plan.

Rule 2 *Eat slowly and chew thoroughly.*

Food can pass through your new stomach only if it's been chewed into very small pieces. Always remember to take more time for your meals and chew your food very well.

Rule 3 *Stop eating as soon as you feel full.*

Once your stomach is full, your body receives a signal that you have eaten enough. It takes time, though, for you to become aware of this signal. If you rush through your meal, you may eat more than you need. This can lead to nausea and vomiting. Take time to enjoy every bite of your meal. Try to recognize the feeling of fullness-then stop eating at once.

Rule 4 *Do not drink while you are eating.*

The LAP-BAND can work only if you eat solid food during your three meals. You should not drink anything for one to two hours after a meal. This allows you to keep the feeling of fullness as long as possible.

Rule 5 *Do not eat between meals.*

After a meal, do not eat anything else until the next meal. Eating snacks between meals is one of the major reasons for weight-loss failure. It is very important to break this habit. If you have proper "fill" levels (you eat the right foods, slowly) you will not feel hungry in between meals. If you are still feeling hungry, this may be a sign that your LAP-BAND System is too loose and you should tell your clinician.

Rule 6 *Eat only good quality, nutritious food.*

With the LAP-BAND System in place, you should be able to eat only a small amount so the food you eat should be as nutritious as possible. Follow the nutrition guidelines from your dietitian. Also, ask your physician before you take any vitamin supplements.

Rule 7 *Avoid fibrous food.*

Food that contains many fibers, such as asparagus, can block the stomach. That's because you can't chew this food well enough to break it up into small pieces and your saliva can't break it down. Fibrous food should be avoided. If you would like to eat asparagus or other fibrous foods once in a while, then be sure to cook them well, cut them into very small pieces first, and then chew thoroughly.

Rule 8 *Drink enough fluids during the day.*

Drinking enough fluids is essential for staying hydrated and for flushing waste products out of your body. Individual needs will vary, but you should drink at least six to eight glasses of liquid a day. Remember: Drink only non-carbonated/zero calorie liquids such as water, tea, or coffee (without milk, cream, or sugar). Also keep your food and drinks completely separate during the day.

Rule 9 *Drink only low-calorie liquids.*

Drinks, including those containing calories (milkshakes, sodas), simply run through the narrow outlet created by the LAP-BAND System. If you drink liquids high in calories, you will lose little weight, even if you follow all of the other dietary guidelines.

Rule 10 *Exercise at least 30 minutes a day.*

Since physical exercise consumes energy and burns calories, it is a very important part of any successful weight-loss program. Obviously, exercise can also help improve your general health. In addition to adopting a routine exercise program, you can increase your activity level in your everyday life. For example, stand rather than sit, walk rather than stand, be outside rather than inside, walk rather than drive, climb the stairs rather than use the elevator. If it's too hot outside to walk, go to the mall. It's as easy as finding a parking space away from entrance to the mall and using the stairs, not the escalator! If you don't have time before or after work, take ten minutes out of your lunch break and walk then. Remember that you should always check with your doctor about the amount and type of exercise that is best for you.