

Physical Health After Total Gastrectomy

PATIENT RESOURCES

HDGC

You can expect your recovery from total gastrectomy to take many months — typically from 6 months to a year. Physical recovery from surgery (healing) alone takes 6 to 8 weeks. The first 3-6 months after total gastrectomy can also be the hardest emotionally and psychologically for the patient and their family, too.

Remember that recovery may not always feel steady; there will be both good days and bad days. Every patient's experience is different. Talk to your health care team about any concerns.

At six months post-surgery, most patients feel as though they have “turned the corner.” This is often associated with having incorporated the new diet and lifestyle habits into your daily routines and having those habits start to feel like second nature.

By one year post-surgery, most people feel as though they established their “new normal,” meaning the post-operative diet and lifestyle changes are now a part of their normal life.

Weight Loss

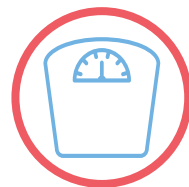
You can expect to lose weight rapidly during the first month after surgery. It typically takes about 6-12 months for you to reach a stable final weight.

Talk to your dietitian to get specific recommendations to help you avoid losing weight too quickly, to avoid losing too much weight or too much muscle mass, and to maintain a healthy weight long-term after gastrectomy.

Lifestyle Modifications

For 8 weeks following surgery you will need to avoid heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds). It can take 6 months to a year for energy and stamina levels to return to pre-operation levels.

Lifelong, you will need to be able to eat small but frequent meals throughout the day (“[Diet and Nutrition After Gastrectomy: What You Should Know](#)”). Therefore, some people have had to adjust their work, home or school schedules, change careers/jobs or apply for special accommodations to meet their diet, nutrition and lifestyle needs after total gastrectomy.



Bone Health

Gastrectomy increases the risk of bone density loss.

The causes of low bone density after total gastrectomy may include:

- Decreased absorption of calcium, which is needed for healthy bones
- Decreased absorption of vitamin D which is needed for healthy bones
- Weight loss after total gastrectomy, which may also impact bone health

There are guidelines for vitamin and mineral supplementation after gastrectomy.

These guidelines recommend the following:

- Take 1200-1500mg per day of elemental calcium in the form of calcium citrate.
- Take at least 3,000 international units of vitamin D daily.
- Consider having a bone density scan (dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry, or DEXA) two years post-operatively.

To minimize the risk of bone density loss after total gastrectomy, follow these tips:

- Talk to your dietitian about which calcium citrate and vitamin D supplements are best for you.
- Talk to your team about exercises and physical activities to keep your bones strong.
- Talk to your team about monitoring your bone density after total gastrectomy.