

# Balanced Fluids

Balanced fluids can help you get enough nutrition when you can't eat solid foods.

You may need balanced fluids if you have:

- had jaw or dental surgery recently
- mouth sores, esophagitis, or esophageal disorders
- trauma to facial bone or muscles
- treatment side-effects

## What are balanced fluids?

Balanced fluids are foods that are pureed with extra fluid. They are free of lumps and can easily flow from a cup, spoon, syringe, or through a straw\*.



\* Avoid using straws if you have been told to by your healthcare team.

## Why balanced fluids?

You need more calories, protein, and nutrients after:

- having surgery
- going through treatment, or
- being ill

Drinking your meals can make it easier for you to get enough nutrition.

Follow instructions from your surgeon or healthcare team for how long you need to drink balanced fluids.

## How to make balanced fluids

You can blend many foods you enjoy into a balanced fluid.

### Prepare your foods

- Remove seeds and tough skins from fresh fruits and vegetables before cooking or blending.
- Cook any foods that need to be cooked, such as meat, eggs, pasta, or grains.
  - Foods should be easily pulled apart or mashed with a fork.
- Cook tough vegetables. This makes them easier to blend. Save your cooking water to help thin your balanced fluid.
- When cooking foods, use ways that add moisture and make the food easier to blend. Try:
  - **Boiling:** Cook food covered in water that is bubbling from heat.
  - **Braising:** Cover food in a fluid like the food (such as beef cooked in beef broth). Cook at a low temperature for a long time.
  - **Poaching:** Cover food in a fluid different from the food (such as fish cooked in water). Cook at a low temperature.
  - **Steaming:** Foods are cooked by steam made from boiling water. The food is separate from the fluid.
  - **Stewing:** Cook food covered in their own juice with extra liquid added.

### Add flavour or seasoning

Herbs, spices, seasonings, and condiments may taste different to you. Taste them before adding them to your food.

- If you add herbs, spices, and seasonings, add them before you blend.
- You can add salad dressings, ketchup, mustard, or relish to add flavor.



## Puree

- To puree, use a food processor, immersion blender, or blender. There should be **no lumps** in your puree.



- Use a sieve to help remove lumps.



Learn more: Search “pureed diet” on [ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts](https://ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts)

## Add fluid and blend

- Add fluids to thin your puree.
  - Choose a fluid that adds flavour and nutrition to your blended food.
  - Try broth, milk, coconut milk, fortified soy beverage, a nutrition supplement drink, or juice.
- If your blended food is too thick, add more fluid to thin it. It should be thin enough to flow easily from a spoon.



## Prepare your food safely

Bacteria can grow more easily in blended foods. Follow these tips to keep your food safe:

### Clean

- Wash your hands.
- Rinse vegetables and fruits well with safe drinkable water.
- Use clean cutting boards, dishes, and counters.



### Separate

- Keep raw meat separate from other foods.

### Cook

- Defrost frozen foods in the fridge or microwave. Cook them right away.
- Do not defrost meat on the counter.
- Cook foods to the right temperature to kill bacteria that can make you sick.
  - Search “[Safe Cooking Temperatures](#)” on Health Canada to learn more.



### Chill

- Keep cold foods cold.
- Put leftovers in the fridge within 2 hours of being cooked.

## Include protein foods

You need protein foods to help build and maintain strength and muscle.

Blend a protein food into your balanced fluids at every meal and snack. Examples of protein foods:

- Beans, peas, lentils
  - all types (canned and dried)
  - hummus
- Dairy products
  - cheese, brick, cottage cheese, cream cheese
  - cream, half-and-half, 10% M.F (milk fat)
  - ice cream (smooth)
  - milk (3.25% (homogenized) and 2%)
  - milk powder (skim and whole)
  - sour cream
  - yogurt including Baltic, Greek, or Icelandic
  - yogurt drinks, lassi, ayran, and kefir
- Eggs, whole and whites
- Lean meats and poultry:
  - beef, bison, elk, goat, lamb, pork, wild game, venison
  - chicken, duck, partridge, turkey, wild fowl
  - fish, such as tilapia, tuna, salmon, sardines
  - seafood and shellfish, such as shrimp
- Nuts and seeds
  - hemp hearts/seeds
  - seed butter, such as pumpkin
  - smooth nut butter, such as almond, peanut, walnut
- Soy
  - edamame
  - fortified soy beverage
  - soy nut butter
  - tofu
- Nutrition supplement drinks and powders
  - look on labels for: “high protein, “plus calories” or “protein max”
  - protein powders



## Tips to get enough nutrition

The tips below can help you get enough nutrition in your balanced fluids.

- Drink 5–6 meals throughout the day.
- Use 3.25% M.F. (milk fat) milk, half and half, or whipping cream in place of lower fat milk.
- Add full-fat sour cream, cream cheese, mayonnaise, or gravy for flavor and calories.
- Add grated cheese into soups and blend with vegetables.
- Use nutrition supplement drinks as the fluid to puree and thin fruits or desserts.
- Try adding nutrition supplement drinks to hot beverages.
- Add olive or canola oil, melted butter or margarine for more calories and healthy fats.
- Thin mashed potatoes with 3.25% M.F. milk, cream, sour cream, melted butter, or gravy.
- Thin puddings, custards, and yogurt with 3.25% M.F. milk or nutrition supplement drinks.
- Blend smooth nut or seed butter into your balanced fluids. Try smooth peanut, almond, or pumpkin seed butter.
- Limit coffee, tea, and pop. These are low in nutrition and may take the place of balanced fluids that have more nutrition.



### Try new recipes

Blend different meals, such as curries, lasagna, pastas, hearty soups, and stews.

## If you are losing weight

You may lose weight when drinking only balanced fluids. This may be muscle loss.

If you are losing weight, have an extra meal of balanced fluids daily. You can also add extra protein and calories to your balanced fluids.

Talk to your dietitian or healthcare team if you continue to lose weight.

## Low energy days

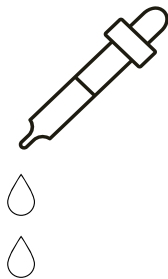
You may have days where you don't feel like making food. Here are some tips to help with making balanced fluids meals on those days.

- Stock your pantry with canned foods. Canned foods tend to blend more easily than fresh or frozen.
  - Ultra-high temperature (UHT) milk is shelf-stable and long-lasting. You can keep it in your pantry like canned foods. Refrigerate after opening.
- Commercial baby food purees can be used when you need a quick meal. Thin them with fluid.
- Make large batches. Keep some in the fridge for drinking within the next day.
  - Freeze in small portions, so you can thaw just what you need.
  - Thaw overnight in the fridge, or in the microwave when ready.
- Keep unopened nutrition supplement drinks around your home to drink between meals.

## Medications, vitamin, mineral, or herbal supplements

Pharmacies may have liquid versions.

Talk to your healthcare team about medications and supplements.



## More information

This website contains additional information and recipes.

[ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts](https://ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts)

Search for nutrition handouts using the topic filters:

- Getting more calories and protein
- Dysphagia

## For support



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on [ahs.ca/811](https://ahs.ca/811).
- Visit [ahs.ca/nutrition](https://ahs.ca/nutrition).