



Bariatric Surgery and Vegetarian Diets

If you were already following a vegetarian diet prior to having bariatric surgery, there are a few special considerations to make sure you're meeting your needs post-surgery. If you're not currently following a vegetarian diet, but want to include more vegetarian options, we recommend waiting until at least one year post-surgery. This is because it is much easier to include vegetarian options once you're able to eat larger amounts of food.

Meeting your protein needs

- There are lots of good vegetarian sources of protein. However, these foods tend to be less protein dense meaning you need to eat more to get the same amount of protein as you would from animal sources.
- It is hard to get enough protein post-surgery due to your smaller stomach so you will need to focus on the best quality protein options, and you may need to continue on protein-rich drinks for a longer period of time.
- Initially after surgery when you're managing very small amounts (for example $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) the majority of your protein choices should be from the **high protein** options listed below. This ensures you're able to maximise your protein intake through food.
- Once you're managing a bit more food (for example $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup) you can start to include some of the **moderate protein** options as well. These can be mixed with the high protein options to maximise your protein intake at a meal.

High Protein Options	Moderate Protein Options
Tofu	Beans (e.g. kidney, black, cannellini, etc.)
Tempeh	Chickpeas
Certain meat replacements (see below)	Lentils
Eggs	Hummus
High protein yoghurt	Cottage cheese
High protein milk	

- Meat replacements that are based on soybeans, soy protein, or pea protein tend to be higher in protein overall. In general, meat replacements should have **more than 6g of protein per $\frac{1}{4}$ cup serving**. You may need to measure this out yourself, as the nutrition information on packets will often only give you information for a larger serving.
- Products available to buy in New Zealand change often, so please ask your dietitian if you have questions about a specific product.
- Be mindful with your choices. Even if the protein content is high, meat replacements that are breaded or fried would still not be recommended due to the high fat and/or carbohydrate content.

Issued by	Dietetics	Issued Date	April 2022	Classification	17 4101-02-006
Authorised by	PCL Dietetics	Review Period	36mths	Page	Page 1 of 2

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Protein Shakes

- Optifast is the recommended protein shake for directly pre- and post-surgery as it is nutritionally complete. This means it contains everything you need to live, including all of the vitamins and minerals.
- Optifast contains a small amount of fish oil. If you are not comfortable taking fish oil, you can source an alternative product.
- Post-surgery, this product needs to be similar to Optifast in order to provide enough protein for you. Your alternative protein shake must contain 20g or more protein, less than 200kcal, less than 4.5g fat, and less than 18g carbohydrates per serving.
- Pre-surgery, this alternative must be nutritionally complete as this will be your only source of nutrition at this stage. Most protein powders are not suitable pre-surgery, so please confirm your chosen alternative with your dietitian. Currently available alternatives for pre-surgery include FastFX, which is completely vegan.
- As your diet will be lower in protein you may need to stay on protein-rich fluids for longer – please confirm with your dietitian before stopping protein shakes, especially if you have had a duodenal switch.

Multivitamins

- For the period straight after surgery, you should follow the standard multivitamin recommendations – both the Berocca Performance and the BariLife powder are suitable for vegetarians.
- After this period, most of the recommended bariatric multivitamins do not contain any animal ingredients and are suitable for vegetarian patients.
- For patients who have had a sleeve or bypass we recommend: BN Multi Chews, NutriChew, or BariLife Just One.
- For patients who have had a duodenal switch we recommend: BariLife (both the powder and tablets are suitable for vegetarians).
- Note: the BN Multi capsules do contain gelatine, but the BN Multi chews do not.

Tips

- You can increase the protein content of a meal by adding higher protein foods, like cottage cheese or powdered peanut butter.
- Many dairy alternatives are very low in protein compared to their traditional counterparts, so cannot be counted as part of your protein intake. For example, a non-dairy yogurt might have less than 1g of protein per 100g compared to 8g of protein in a high protein dairy yogurt. Choose higher protein dairy alternatives, like high protein soy milk, where possible. Use lower protein options only as part of a higher protein meal. For example, using a dollop of plant-based yogurt on a high protein stew, or whisking a scoop of protein powder through a plant based yogurt.

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