



University Hospitals  
Plymouth  
NHS Trust

# Patient Information Leaflet

# Healthy diet for gallstones

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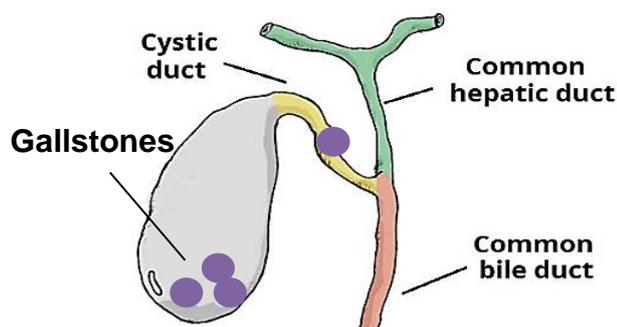


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## What are gallstones?

Bile in the gallbladder breaks down fats. Excess cholesterol in the blood can concentrate in the gallbladder to form crystallised gallstones. Usually they cause no problems, but occasionally they get impacted in the bile duct resulting in sudden pain, vomiting and nausea. This leads to inflammation of the gallbladder known as cholecystitis. Treatment would be removal of the stone and gallbladder via a keyhole operation.

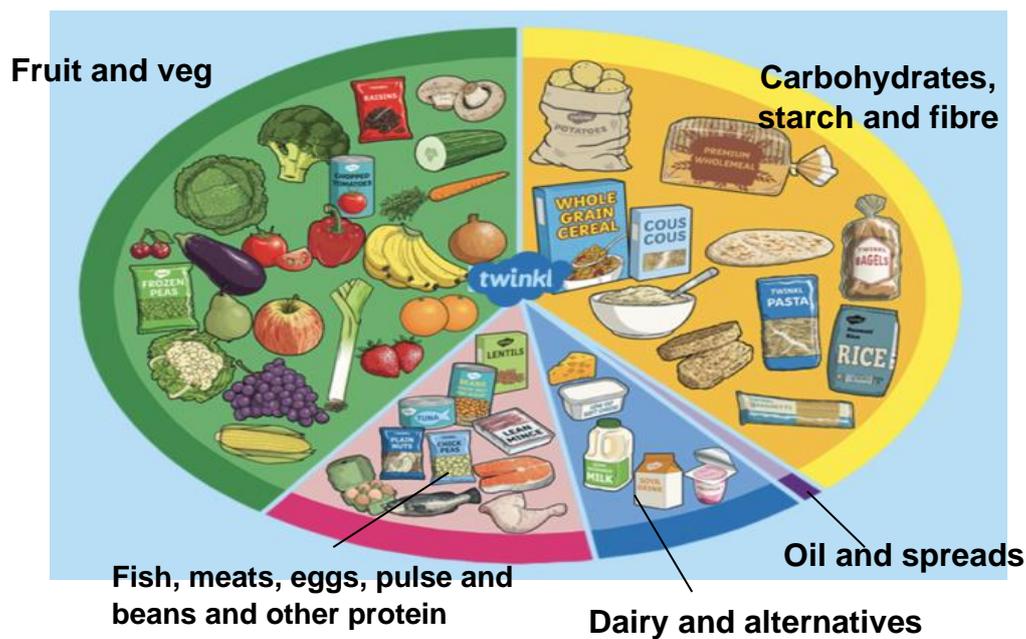


## What is a healthy balanced diet?

Dietary factors reduce the risk of gallstone formation. It is recommended a healthy balanced diet is followed, pre- and post-surgery. The Eatwell guide recommends:

- 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- Carbohydrates should form a 3<sup>rd</sup> of the diet such as bread and pasta
- Including protein- 2 portions of fish (1 oily), meat, eggs, beans/ pulses
- Reduce saturated fats and sugars
- Reduce salt
- Include low-fat dairy products or alternatives (2-3 portions/day)

# Eatwell healthy plate



## Should I adopt a low-fat diet if I have gallstones?

There is no concrete evidence to suggest a low-fat diet should be adopted. Studies have shown reducing cholesterol and saturated fat intake reduces the risk of gallstone formation. It may also reduce pain pre- and post- surgery because of stimulation of gallbladder contraction to release bile. If overweight, a gradual weight loss of 1-2lbs (0.5-1kg) per week can help reduce your risk of gallstones.

Studies have shown increasing unsaturated fats and omega-3 prevents gallstones because it helps the gallbladder empty regularly. It is important to increase the quantity consumed pre- and post-surgery.

## Examples of fats

Saturated fats	Unsaturated fats	Omega-3
<p>Processed meats e.g. burgers, sausages</p> <p>Butter, margarines</p> <p>Hard cheese</p> <p>Snacks-chips, crisps, cakes, biscuits</p> 	<p>Vegetable oil</p> <p>Rapeseed oil</p> <p>Oily fish</p> <p>Nuts and seeds</p>	<p>Oily fish such as mackerel, sardines, and salmon</p> 

## Should I cut out carbohydrates?

There is no evidence to suggest carbohydrates should be cut out completely. However, it is advised that carbohydrates that are broken down quickly (e.g. white rice, white bread and potatoes) should be swapped for wholegrain options. Fibres should be increased because it reduces the amount of cholesterol saturation. Foods include fruit, vegetables, wholegrain breads/pasta, oats and nuts.

## 10 tips:

- 1) Eat a balanced diet that consists of all food groups
- 2) Avoid foods that make your pain worse- keep a food diary to identify them
- 3) There is no concrete evidence that a low-fat diet is beneficial. However, it is important to limit saturated fat and replace with unsaturated fats. Please check food labels for total fat content and choose lower fat options- Low fat: <3g per 100g and high fat: >17.5g per 100g
- 4) Increase the amounts of oily fish
- 5) Increase the amount of fibre
- 6) Reduce the amount of white rice, white bread, and potatoes
- 7) Increase wholegrain foods
- 8) There is no special diet for pre- or post- surgery
- 9) Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day whether that be dried, fresh, cooked or juiced
- 10) Keep yourself well hydrated- at least 8-10 cups a day



**Your notes:**

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