

How to Make the Most of Your Band Fill Appointment

Each time you come in for a band fill, we will ask you a series of questions regarding your eating and how the band feels. This information is used to identify if you are at the right fill level. Finding the “sweet spot” or the exact spot where you are not filled too much or too little takes thoughtful discussion with the Penn State Hershey Surgical Weight Loss team. Please take some time prior to your appointment to consider the following questions.

- **Are you able to eat more than one cup of SOLID food at a meal?**

The right fill level should restrict portions to about 1 to 1.5 cups of food at a meal. The important thing to think about is the texture of that food. When we say SOLID food, we mean can you eat 2-3 ounces of lean meat, a small amount of starch such as ½ a baked potato, and a small serving of steamed vegetables? If you are not able to tolerate these food textures or the amount of food, your band may be too tight.

- **How long does it take you to eat a meal?**

The band is correctly adjusted if you are able to eat a high-quality meal such as lean meat, starch, and a vegetable in 20-30 minutes without feeling pain, pressure, tightness, or the need to vomit. If it takes you 45 minutes to an hour to eat this meal, your band may be too tight.

- **Is your stomach growling between meals?**

The feeling of physical hunger (as opposed to mental, emotional hunger) between meals is a normal physical response during weight loss. It is okay to feel some level of hunger prior to a meal. If you don't feel hungry between meals, your band may be appropriately adjusted.

- **How frequently are you vomiting or burping up food?**

Vomiting or regurgitation can be a sign that you are eating too quickly and/or too large of a portion. If this is happening to you, try eating smaller amounts of food. Adjusting to the very small portions that you should be eating after surgery is often the hardest thing to learn. Frequent over-filling of the pouch that leads to regurgitation can cause the pouch and the esophagus to stretch. Vomiting can also lead to slippage of the band. Not only are these serious medical problems that could lead to a re-operation, but the practices often lead to poor weight loss.

If the band is too tight, solid foods will not pass through normally no matter how careful you are about portions. Be aware of this and contact the team as soon as this becomes a problem. It is better to make an appointment to remove some of the fluid than to avoid solid foods and eat soft foods. This habit often leads to weight gain because portions of soft “slider foods” are not well restricted even though the band is too tight.

- **Are you experiencing hiccups, “slime-ing”, or “foamies” (too much saliva in your mouth)?**

Some people don't experience vomiting from over-filling the pouch, but may have one of these symptoms. They can be a sign that you are eating too fast and/or eating too large of a portion. Try chewing thoroughly and eating smaller amounts of food. If eating less does not work, your band may be too tight, and you should contact the team to have some fluid removed from your band. Frequent over-filling of the pouch can stretch the esophagus and/or the pouch. This is a serious medical problem that can lead to re-operation.

- **Are you having any difficulty swallowing or tightness in the throat?**

One thing patients will tell us is that if they eat too big of a portion, they feel as if the food is stuck in their throat. Try eating a smaller portion, eating more slowly, or chewing more thoroughly. This sensation can occur if the band is too tight.

- **Are you experiencing acid reflux, heartburn, or night cough?**

These are all signs that your band may be too tight. Chronic reflux can cause serious problems with the esophagus. Please contact the team to make an appointment if you are experiencing symptoms.

- **Finding the “Sweet Spot”**

Finding the adjustment level that is right for you may take some time. It certainly does take a lot of thought on your part to “get to know” your band and how you feel when you eat. Consider the following when you have a meal.

Too Loose	Just Right	Too tight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-1.5 cups of food leaves you hungry within 1 hour • No sense of pressure, tightness, or restriction when eating • No weight loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied with 1-1.5 cups of food • Feel tightness or pressure if portions are larger than 1-1.5 cups • Satisfied for 2-3 hours • Weight loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight gain • Seeking soft or slider food • Vomiting solid foods • Hiccups • Heartburn • Night cough • Difficulty swallowing