

Fact Sheet

Central Adelaide Local Health Network

Your Diet Before Surgery using a VLED

What is a VLED?

A VLED is a **Very Low Energy Diet** using shakes and other products. This diet

- Helps to maintain your immune function
- Promotes fat loss, especially from the liver
- Gives some weight loss
- Preserves muscle
- Helps to fill you up
- Is nutritionally complete with adequate amounts of protein, vitamins, minerals

Sometimes these products are also called **VLCD (Very Low Calorie Diet)**



There are three products recommended

- **Optifast® (Standard variety)**
- **OptislimVLCD®**
- **KicStart®.**

They are available from your pharmacy or online.

You are advised not to purchase an alternative product as it may not be the same nutritionally & may not work as well.



Why do I need a strict VLED before surgery?

- For your surgery to be as safe as possible.
- So your surgery is not postponed or even cancelled

Please discuss with your surgeon how long you will need to follow the VLED before surgery. Usually it will be for at least three weeks.



How much does a VLED cost?

The cost of each brand varies. Check the prices at your local pharmacy and at the discount pharmacies. Keep in mind that the cost of these products taken 3 times per day can work out equivalent or even cheaper than your usual meals as you will not need to purchase many other foods and drinks while on the VLED.



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Medical Follow Up

It is important to see your general practitioner (GP) before starting the VLED. This allows your doctor to monitor your blood pressure, electrolytes and adjust any medications if needed. Discuss with your GP how often they need to review your progress. This is especially important if you have:

- recent heart attack or stroke
- kidney or liver problems
- gout
- diabetes on medications or insulin
- take medications for a psychological condition
- take medications which can cause low sodium levels (ie. for high blood pressure)
- low sodium or potassium levels
- on a fluid restriction

How do I take a VLED?

Products available will be depend on the VLED brand you choose. Most are available as shakes and soups and some brands also include bars and desserts.

You need to have 3 products per day (unless instructed otherwise by your Dietitian/treating specialist) along with some allowed vegetables, one teaspoon of vegetable oil and water to drink.

Mixing instructions (for shakes)

Pour 200 - 250ml cold water into a shaker or blender, add the contents of the sachet and shake or blend to dissolve.

Thickness: you may vary the consistency of the VLED by changing the amount of water and/or temperature of the water used in mixing. Room temperature tap water makes it thinner; icy cold water makes it thicker. Some people like to add crushed ice.

Flavour: the products taste quite sweet but sweet non-calorie artificial sweeteners are permitted (eg Hermesetas or Equal tablets) and will strengthen the flavour. You could also add instant coffee or an essence (eg. vanilla, peppermint, banana, almond) to strengthen the flavour.

Water Intake

Besides the VLED products you need to drink at least 2 Litres each day. This equals to 8 cups. Water is the best choice. You can include plain mineral water, diet cordial, or diet soft drink. You may need even more water in warmer weather.

You can add flavour to plain water or soda water with slices of lemon, lime, cucumber, or fresh mint leaves, or Lipton or Twinings fruit infusions.

Limit caffeine containing drinks - coffee, tea and cola flavoured diet drinks – to no more than 2 cups per day. Tea and coffee can be prepared with a dash of skim milk only.

Avoid all drinks containing added sugar (eg. regular cordial, regular soft drink, sports drinks, fruit juice and alcohol) as these will sabotage the VLED, can stimulate your appetite and increase the likelihood of you stopping the diet.

What else do I need to eat every day?

- ✓ 2 cups of low starch vegetables everyday (see table 1)
- ✓ 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil (eg canola, sunflower, olive). Measure with a teaspoon – don't guess!

The vegetables provide fibre and help prevent constipation.
The oil provides essential fatty acids, helps to prevent gallstones.



2 cups low starch vegetables & 1 teaspoon oil

You may decide to have 1 cup of vegetables at lunch and the other cup at dinner or you can have 2 cups at one meal.

Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables are suitable

✓	Allowed Foods: Low starch vegetables (2 cups/day) and other allowed condiments			✗	Not allowed
alfalfa	leeks	artificial sweeteners	soy sauce	alcohol	
asparagus	lettuce	chilli	stock cubes	cordial	
beans	mung beans	coffee dash milk	tea dash milk only	corn	
bok choy	mushrooms	curry powder	tomato paste	fruit	
broccoli	onions	diet drinks	unsweetened gum	juice	
Brussels sprouts	radish	diet jelly	vegetable soup (stock cube with allowed veggies)	lentils	
	shallots	garlic		legumes	
cabbage	silver beet	herbs	vinegar	milk drinks	
capsicum	snow peas	lemon juice	water	peas	
carrots	spinach	mineral water	Worcestershire sauce	potato	
cauliflower	squash	mustard		pumpkin	
celery	tomato	spices	Konjac noodles/pasta	soft drinks	
cucumber	watercress	soda water		sports drinks	
eggplant	zucchini			sweet potato	
				sugar	

You may choose to make your low starch vegetables into

- salad with white vinegar or lemon juice and 1 teaspoon olive oil as dressing
- vegetable stir fry using 1 teaspoon oil only, adding some soy sauce & coriander
- steamed, boiled or oven roasted vegetables with 1 teaspoon of added oil
- vegetable soup made from a stock cube and low starch vegetables

There are some great recipe ideas at www.opticook.com

What can I eat if I feel hungry?

You may feel more hungry than usual for first couple of weeks on a VLED. But after that it gets easier. If you are hungry, you can try the following:

- water, soda water, mineral water or diet cordial
- diet jelly
- ice block made from diet cordial

IF SURGERY IS PLANNED

It is very important that you do not eat anything else (ie. break the VLED diet recommendations) in the 5 days before your surgery

Suggested meal plan:

Breakfast	1 x VLED product
Lunch	1 x VLED product
Dinner	1 x VLED product
EVERYDAY	2 Litres water 2 cups low starchy vegetables 1 teaspoon vegetable oil

Troubleshooting Common Problems

Constipation

There is some fibre in the VLED products, but it is important that you have at least 2 cups of low starch vegetables (or more) and the recommended amount of fluid every day to help prevent constipation.

If you are constipated, you can add two teaspoons of a fibre supplement, such as psyllium husks, Metamucil® or Benefibre® to a glass of water or your milkshake at breakfast and lunch every day. If there is no effect after a few days, repeat this at tea time as well. Speak to your Pharmacist or GP about other appropriate medication if still constipated.

Bad Breath

This shows that your metabolism has shifted to using fats for energy and you are in a state of ketosis, therefore the VLED is working! Try and brush your teeth regularly, try a mouth wash or unsweetened chewing gum or mints to help.



Can I exercise while using a VLED?

It is important to include regular physical activity in your daily plan to maintain muscle while losing weight.



- If you are just starting, it is important to start slowly and check with your GP FIRST
- Try walking, riding or swimming.
- If your ability to walk is limited try water-based exercise or use an exercise bike or do chair-based exercises
- Start with 5 minutes or however long you can comfortably manage
- You can do several blocks of 5 minutes over the day.
- Gradually do more – for more time, more often or more intense
- Seek professional advice regarding an appropriate exercise program suited to your capabilities.

In the long-term, aim to include at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

Any further questions?

Ask your GP, the clinic doctor, surgeon or a dietitian.

If you feel at all unwell when you start the VLED, please contact your GP for advice and support.

The information contained within the publication does not constitute medical advice and is for general information only. Readers should always seek independent, professional advice where appropriate.

For more information

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