

# VLED before surgery

## What is a VLED?

VLED is a **Very Low Energy Diet** using shakes and other products to replace all meals. It can also be called a **VLCD (Very Low Calorie Diet)** or a very low carbohydrate diet.

## Why do I need a strict VLED before surgery?

VLED works by restricting carbohydrate in your diet. Your body then burns its own fat stores for fuel, leading to 'ketosis'. This reduces the fat around your abdomen which makes surgery safer. Burning these fat stores keeps you fuller for longer and therefore reduces feelings of hunger. This assists with weight loss pre-surgery but maintains strong muscles aiding your recovery.

**Your surgeon will advise you how many weeks you need to follow the VLED. Remember to follow this strictly in the lead up to your surgery to ensure adequate weight loss and avoid possible cancellation.**

## See your general practitioner (GP) before starting VLED

This is essential if you take regular medications or have other health conditions. You should not be on a VLED if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. If you are over 65 years old, you may require additional calcium and vitamin D supplementation. If you are feeling unwell during the VLED visit your GP.

## VLED and Diabetes

A VLED is low in carbohydrate (35-70g per day). People with diabetes require close monitoring due to the risk of low blood sugar levels (hypoglycaemia). Talk to your GP or Endocrinologist about adjustments to your medication before commencing the VLED. Check your blood glucose levels regularly.

## What do I eat on a VLED?

You must eat these foods everyday:



**3 VLED products**

*(Unless instructed otherwise by your Dietitian/treating specialist)*

+



2 cups of allowed vegetables (see below)

+



1 teaspoon of oil

+



2 litres of water

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**Approved VLED products:**

- **Optifast®**
- **Optislim VLCD®**

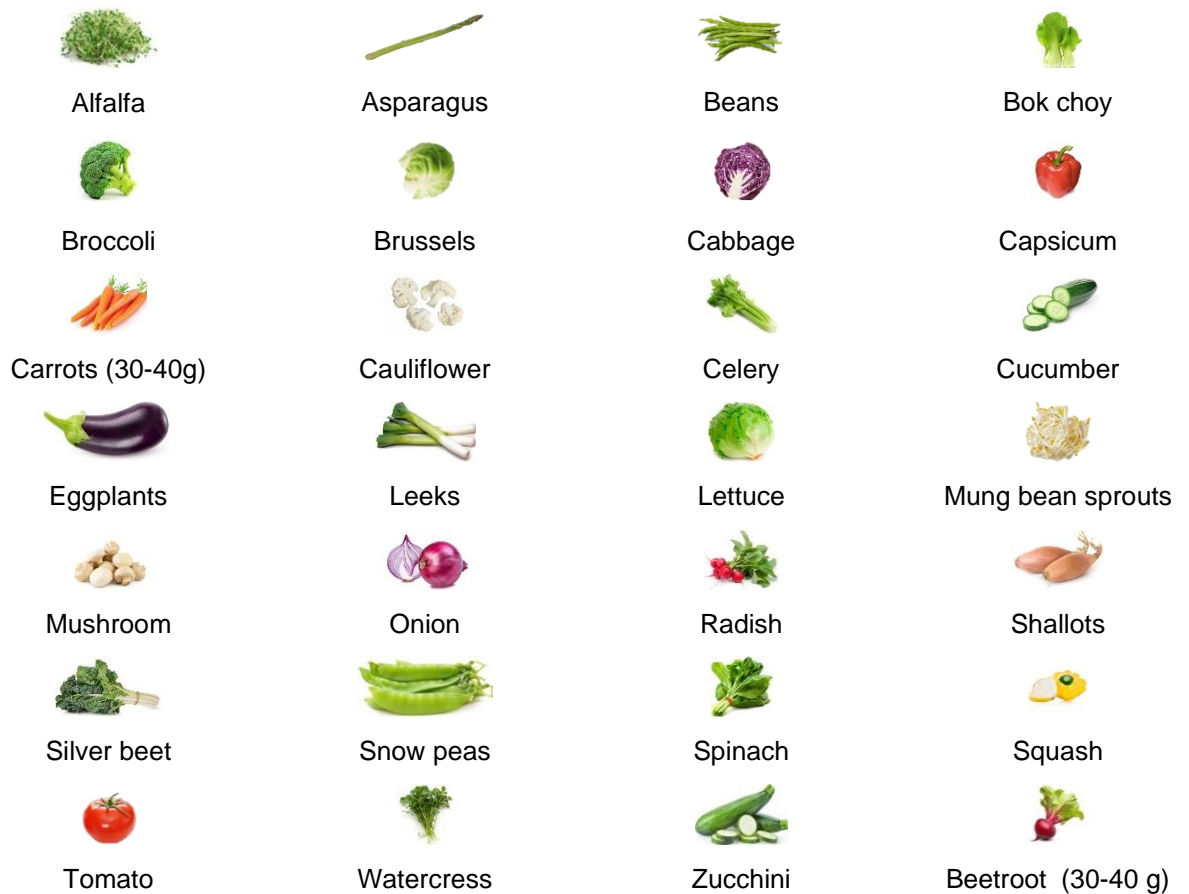
The shakes, bars, soups and desserts are all nutritionally complete.

**What oil should I use?**

You can include 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil each day. Canola, sunflower or olive oil are the best choices.

**What vegetables can I eat?**

You must eat at least 2 cups of **Allowed** vegetables (see below). These can be fresh, frozen or canned vegetables. The fibre in these vegetables helps prevent constipation.



**Meal Ideas:**

- A salad with vinegar or lemon juice and olive oil as dressing
- A vegetable stir fry using oil, soy sauce and coriander

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- A roast veggie stack with oil
- A soup made with a stock cube and oil
- A pasta sauce with oil and allowed vegetables (e.g. tinned tomatoes, onion, mushroom), zucchini noodles (“zoodles”) or Konjac noodles

There are more great recipe ideas at <http://opticook.org/>

### What else is allowed?

#### Allowed condiments:

- |                |               |                          |
|----------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| ✓ Chili        | ✓ Lemon Juice | ✓ Stock cubes**          |
| ✓ Curry powder | ✓ Mustard     | ✓ Tomato paste           |
| ✓ Bonox**      | ✓ Miso soup** | ✓ Vinegar                |
| ✓ Garlic       | ✓ Soy sauce** | ✓ Worcestershire sauce** |
| ✓ Herbs        | ✓ Spices      |                          |

\*\* In moderation as high in salt

#### Allowed other food / drinks:

- |   |  |                                     |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Konjac noodles (Slender Slim pasta range)           | ✓ Essence (vanilla, peppermint, banana, or almond) | ✓ Mineral water                     |
| ✓ Artificial sweeteners (Hermesetas or Equal tablets) | ✓ Diet drinks                                      | ✓ Soda water                        |
| ✓ Water   | ✓ Diet jelly                                       | ✓ Tea with a dash of milk (30mL)    |
|   | ✓ Unsweetened gum                                  | ✓ Coffee with a dash of milk (30mL) |

#### Not allowed vegetables:

- |           |           |                |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| ✗ Corn    | ✗ Peas    | ✗ Sweet potato |
| ✗ Lentils | ✗ Potato  |                |
| ✗ Legumes | ✗ Pumpkin |                |

#### Not allowed other food / drinks:

- |                 |               |                   |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| ✗ Fruit         | ✗ Milk drinks | ✗ Dairy products  |
| ✗ Sugar         | ✗ Alcohol     | ✗ Bread / cereals |
| ✗ Soft drinks   | ✗ Cordial     | ✗ Pasta / rice    |
| ✗ Sports drinks | ✗ Juice       |                   |

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### How much water should I drink?

In addition to the VLED products you need to drink at least 2 litres each day. Water is the best choice. You can also include plain mineral water, diet cordial, or diet soft drink. You may even need more water in the warmer weather.

Add flavour to plain water by adding:

- Slices of lemon, lime or cucumber
- Fresh mint leaves
- Diet 'tea' / cordial

Caffeinated drinks can contribute to dehydration so limit to 3-4 cups each day. These drinks include:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Cola flavoured diet drinks

### Sample Meal plan:

#### Breakfast



VLED shake

OR



VLED bar

#### Lunch



VLED shake

OR



VLED soup

+



1C steamed vegetables

#### Dinner



VLED shake

+



Vegetable stirfry with konjac noodles + tsp oil



### Commonly asked questions

#### Can I exercise while on a VLED?

It is important to include regular physical activity every day to maintain muscle while losing weight. If you are starting out, be sure to start slowly. You can try:

- Walking, riding, swimming, water aerobics and exercise bike
- Seek professional advice about an exercise program suited to your needs.

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### Why does my breath smell?

This is a sign that your body is burning fat for fuel. Brush your teeth regularly; try a mouth wash or unsweetened chewing gum or mints to assist with this.

### What can I eat if I feel hungry?

You may feel more hungry than usual for the first few days on a VLED whilst your body is adjusting. After this time the hunger reduces significantly. If you are hungry, you can try the following:

- Soda water + diet cordial
- Diet jelly
- Ice block made with diet cordial
- Additional 'allowed' vegetables

### What about constipation?

If you are eating 2 cups of vegetables and drinking 2 litres of water per day but are still constipated, you can try a fibre supplement (such as Metamucil® or psyllium husks). Speak to your Pharmacist or GP for advice.

### Seeing a Dietitian

**After your surgery, remember to cease the VLED and follow a healthy eating plan to maintain your weight during the recovery phase.** This will promote healing of your surgical wounds. Once you have recovered, it is recommended that you seek advice from a dietitian. Dietitians can be found in your local community health centre or in private practice (refer to the yellow pages or the Dietitians Association website <https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/>).

### For more information:

Please contact the CALHN Nutrition & Dietetics Department at:

**The Queen Elizabeth Hospital**  
Telephone: (08) 8222 6734

**Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre**  
Telephone: (08) 8222 1721

**The Royal Adelaide Hospital**  
Telephone: (08) 7074 000

*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.*

*Acknowledgements:*

*OPTIFAST® VLCD™ patient information booklet: "Achieve Your Weight Loss Goals".*

*KicStart™ VLED Patient information booklet.*

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