

What are some practical strategies that can help manage sugar cravings, binge eating, or foods that trigger alcohol cravings?

The key is to keep your blood sugar steady and your body well-nourished. Here are some strategies that can make a big difference:

- **Balance your meals:** Include a mix of complex carbs, lean protein, and healthy fats in every meal or snack. This helps you feel fuller for longer and prevents spikes (and crashes) in blood sugar.
- **Don't skip meals:** Long gaps without food can make cravings stronger. Aim for regular, steady eating throughout the day.
- **Add more fibre:** Fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains promote fullness and support gut health.
- **Stay hydrated:** Sometimes what feels like a craving is actually thirst. Keep water handy.
- **Move your body:** Exercise boosts mood and helps curb cravings by releasing feel-good hormones.
- **Look after your lifestyle basics:** Good sleep and stress management reduce the urge to turn to food or alcohol for comfort.
- **Practice mindful eating:** Step away from the TV or phone when you eat. Pause and ask yourself: "What am I really feeling right now?" This can help break the autopilot cycle of snacking.

Do structured meal plans actually help with recovery, or do they set people up to fail?

It depends on the individual. Meal plans can be useful if they are flexible, balanced, and not overly restrictive. Avoid plans that cut out entire food groups or feel too rigid - life happens, and your nutrition approach should allow for adjustments.

For people who have had weight loss surgery, what special nutrition considerations should they keep in mind during recovery?

After surgery, you'll need to follow your specialist's dietary guidelines closely. Because nutrient absorption changes, you may be more at risk of vitamin or mineral deficiencies - so regular check-ins with your doctor are key. Focus on protein, vegetables, fruit, and other nutrient-dense foods to support recovery.

If you've lost your appetite on Naltrexone, what small meals or snacks can provide the best nutrition?

Aim for small, frequent, high-energy, high-protein meals and snacks. Try foods like cheese and crackers, fruit with yoghurt, hummus with crackers, nuts, dried fruit, or smoothies with fruit, milk, and protein powder. Cooking with olive oil, adding avocado, or using peanut butter

in snacks can help boost calorie intake. Meal replacement shakes (e.g., Sustagen, Up & Go, Optifast) can also be useful.

How can the way we eat support people managing both recovery and mental health challenges like anxiety or depression?

There's a strong link between diet and mental health. A Mediterranean-style diet - rich in vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, legumes, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and fish - has been shown to reduce the risk of depression. Gut health also plays a role, so include plenty of fibre from plant foods. Eating regularly with low-GI carbs and proteins helps stabilise blood sugar, while omega-3 fats (from oily fish, flax, walnuts) support brain health.

Can food choices play a role in improving memory or cognitive recovery?

Yes. Healthy fats like omega-3s (from salmon, sardines, flax, chia, and walnuts) support brain function. Antioxidant-rich foods such as berries, dark leafy greens, colourful vegetables, and green tea also help. B vitamins and magnesium, found in eggs, whole grains, and nuts, play a role in energy production and reducing brain fog. A Mediterranean-style diet—rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, fish, olive oil, and fermented foods—offers one of the best foundations for memory and cognitive health. Limiting processed foods and added sugars is also important.

What's the best way to support gut and stomach health, including conditions like IBS or IBD?

For general gut health, eat a wide variety of plant-based foods and include fermented foods like yoghurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and sourdough. With IBS, a low-FODMAP diet and moderating caffeine may help. With IBD, lower-fibre foods during flare-ups can reduce symptoms - but knowing your triggers is key. Stress management, good sleep, and regular exercise are also important.

What foods or dietary approaches are best for supporting liver health during recovery?

A balanced wholefoods diet with plenty of coloured fruits and vegetables, legumes, and lean proteins is best. Limit processed, fatty, or sugary foods like fast food, biscuits, and soft drinks. Incorporate meat-free meals, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage), leafy greens, berries, and omega-3-rich fish. Maintaining a healthy weight also reduces strain on the liver.