

# Dietary advice for people with gallstones or cholecystitis who are struggling to eat



## What does the gallbladder do?

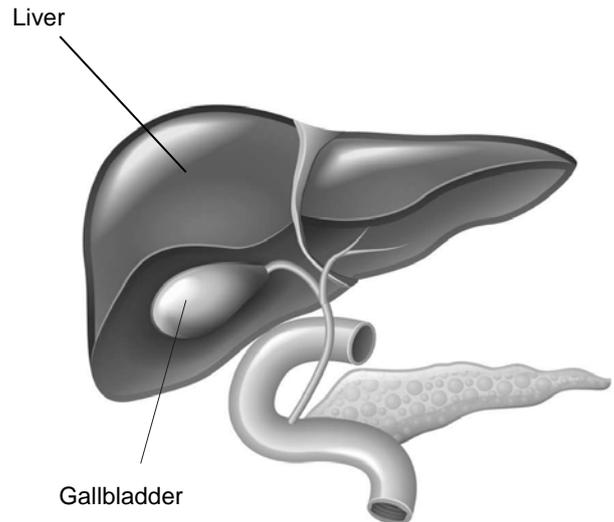
Your gallbladder, found beneath the liver, stores, concentrates and releases bile, a liquid which helps the body to digest fat from the food we eat.

## What are gallstones?

Gallstones are small stones that form in the gallbladder from hardened cholesterol, bile pigments or calcium. They can cause pain, cholecystitis, jaundice and pancreatitis.

## What is cholecystitis?

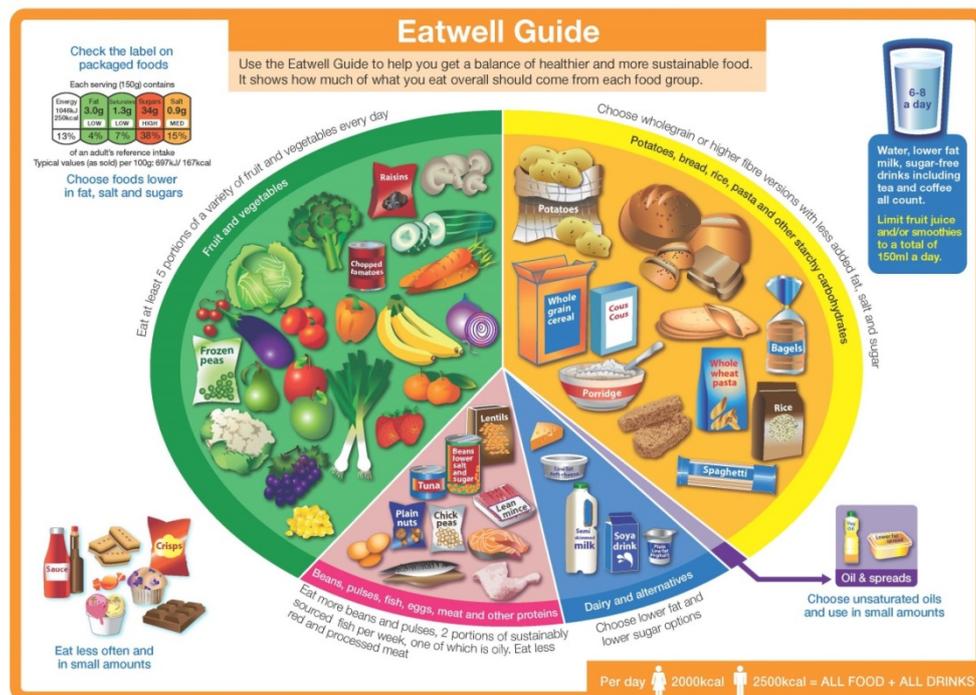
Cholecystitis is inflammation of the gallbladder. It usually occurs when a gallstone blocks the cystic duct.



## Can changing my diet help with my gallbladder problems?

People are often told to follow a low fat diet if they are diagnosed with cholecystitis or gallstones; however, there is little evidence to suggest that removing any type of food from your diet will improve your symptoms or condition. Cutting the fat from your diet may lead to rapid weight loss which is associated with increased risk of gallstones and malnutrition.

People with cholecystitis or gallstones should eat a variety of foods and have regular meals and snacks. Generally, it is recommended that people with gallbladder problems eat within the healthy eating principles demonstrated on the 'Eat Well Guide'. However, if you are already experiencing weight loss this may result in further weight loss.



### **What if I have symptoms when I eat certain foods?**

Some people may experience pain after eating; this is caused by eating in general as eating causes the gallbladder to contract and not by certain foods. If you experience pain with certain foods, avoid the food for a trial period to see if the pain reduces. If symptoms continue, reintroduce the food and speak with your Doctor or Pharmacist about appropriate pain relief. Missing meals can make your symptoms worse so it is important to eat regularly.

### **What can I do if I have lost my appetite or am losing weight?**

- Eat smaller meals, but more frequently. Aim for 5-6 small, snack type meals throughout the day
- Try having your food on a smaller plate and keep the portions small. You can always have second helpings
- Do not fill up on low energy, filling foods like fruit and vegetables unless they are served with cream, ice cream or cheese sauce
- Whenever possible choose high protein varieties of foods as protein is important for the body to recover e.g. foods including meat, fish, beans, lentils, cheese and milk
- Milk is a nourishing drink. Choose full cream milk as it will give you more calories than a fat reduced milk. Try a glass of full cream milk, a latte, a malted milk drink (Horlicks or Ovaltine), hot chocolate, Lassi, Indian tea or Complan between meals
- Add extra butter, oil or ghee to your meal at lunch or dinner e.g. to mashed potatoes, rice or vegetables
- Make sure you have snacks readily available to nibble on whenever you can
- Eat your meals slowly, chew your food well and try to relax for a while after you have eaten
- Try not to have low energy fluids e.g. water, tea or coffee just before eating
- Have milk puddings such as rice pudding, custard, shrikhund or sero with extra cream

Cutting out fat or restricting other foods can put you at risk of malnutrition so it is important that you monitor your weight and eat a nourishing diet high in energy and protein.

### **What can I do if I feel nauseous?**

- Try eating small amounts but often.
- Try dry bread/toast, crackers or plain biscuits
- Try foods that contain ginger
- Cold foods with less smell may be easier to manage & avoid cooking smells
- Speak to your Doctor or pharmacist about anti-sickness medications

### **What if I have my gallbladder removed (cholecystectomy)?**

After a cholecystectomy, you do not need to follow a special diet. Your liver will continue to produce bile that will drip into the bowel continuously rather than being stored in the gallbladder. It is important that you continue to eat well to recover from your surgery. Once you have recovered, it is advisable for you to return to eating a healthy balanced diet.