

Heritage Weight Management Center

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS AND PRECAUTIONS RELATED TO AN 800 CALORIE DIET

1. **Intolerance to cold:** during winter on in air conditioned rooms, carry an extra sweater or coat.
2. **Light-headedness on rising, due to water loss:**
 - ❖ Avoid hot tubs, saunas, swimming alone, or horseback riding.
 - ❖ Get up slowly from lying or sitting position.
 - ❖ Avoid situations where light-headedness would present a danger, such as working at heights.
 - ❖ Drink two quarts of water daily.
3. **Fatigue.** Your energy level should be good if you follow the program exactly and get enough rest. Transient fatigue occurs in some patients during the first week, but prolonged fatigue is not usually a problem. If you feel extended fatigue, please let the doctor know so we can adjust your treatment appropriately.
4. **Dry skin, dry hair, and brittle nails:**
 - ❖ Use skin moisturizers.
 - ❖ Notify your hairdresser to use caution with any hair treatments.
 - ❖ Avoid deodorant soaps, as they are more drying.
5. **Temporary loss of some hair.** This is a transient and reversible side effect believed to be due to decreased metabolic rate and possible changes in thyroid levels. It is not baldness. Rather, it represents a breaking off of hair due to slowing of growth and brittleness. It is reversible and hair typically grows back after the transition to food, however, it may take time.
6. **Change in bowel habits. Constipation, loose or dark stools are not uncommon:**
 - ❖ Try a bulking agent such as Benefiber. Bulking agents are effective for both constipation and loose stools.
 - ❖ Avoid enemas as these cause potassium loss.
 - ❖ Recognize that iron in OPTIFAST may cause dark stools. This is harmless.
 - ❖ Increase physical activity and fluid intake. This will contribute to regularity.
7. **Headache, especially in the first few weeks:**
 - ❖ Increase fluids.
 - ❖ Use Tylenol or other acetaminophen containing products.
 - ❖ Avoid aspirin, buffered aspirin, or ibuprofen-type products (such as Advil), because these can cause stomach irritation.
8. **Improvement in fertility, especially women.** Use appropriate birth control measures.
9. **Bad breath:**
 - ❖ Brush teeth and tongue frequently (massage gums also to keep them in good condition since you won't be chewing food while on OPTIFAST).
 - ❖ Use mouthwash.
 - ❖ Drink a glass of water after having OPTIFAST.
 - ❖ Chew up to 5 sticks of sugar-free gum per day.
10. **Gallstones and gall bladder disease** are very common in the general obese population. A reported potential side effect of any low calorie diet is the appearance of, or development of, unsuspected or undetected gallstones. It is important that you closely follow the transition plan back to food, and report any symptoms to your program physician immediately.