



**ELM Medicine**  
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# OPTIFAST PROGRAM STARTER GUIDE





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## Supporting You Through Your Weight Loss Journey

The OPTIFAST weight management program is based on scientific evidence, supported by a team of healthcare professionals who are experts in weight management.

It is designed to help you learn to take control, set realistic goals, learn new habits, many healthy lifestyle changes, and lose weight to improve your health status.



## Expert Support Along Your Journey

OPTIFAST is more than a diet plan. It is a comprehensive lifestyle education program that limits your calorie intake while providing the support and expertise of healthcare professionals. It provides educational resources to help you achieve your weight loss goals and support your long-term success.

- ✓ OPTIFAST 900 Meal Replacement Shakes: OPTIFAST 900 shakes are used initially in the program to promote steady weight loss. OPTIFAST 900 provides high protein, complete, balanced nutrition. While limiting your energy intake to 900 calories per day.
- ✓ Medical Supervision: The OPTIFAST program team of experts includes physicians, dietitians, nurses, physiotherapists, and other healthcare experts to provide you with the support you need to help you lose weight safely and make important lifestyle changes.
- ✓ Comprehensive Lifestyle Education: To help you achieve a healthy weight that is right for you and establish a healthy lifestyle for long-term results.
- ✓ Expert Counseling: For personalized support and advice.
- ✓ Ongoing Personalized Support: To help ensure long-term success.

## Take the Steps that could Help Change Your Life

A typical OPTIFAST Program consists of 4 phases, all under medical supervision:

1. **Assessment**: In week 1, you begin the program with a comprehensive assessment and physical exam to help you set personalized goals and expectations.
2. **Active Weight Loss**: During this 12-week phase, you will consume an exclusive diet of OPTIFAST 900 meal replacements, attend educational sessions to gain insights and new skills
3. **Transition**: In weeks 14-17, you will gradually reintroduce regular foods into your diet as you receive ongoing lifestyle and education support.
4. **Maintenance**: During weeks 18-26, you will continue with lifestyle education and professional support sessions to help you stabilize and maintain your weight loss. During this time and past 26 weeks, you may wish to continue taking 1-2 servings of OPTIFAST 900 each day to help you maintain your weight loss.



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### **What can I Expect while Taking OPTIFAST 900?**

- During the first 3-7 days, you may experience mild symptoms such as nausea, bad breath, constipation, diarrhea, intolerance to the cold, or mild hunger.
- If you are taking medication please discuss with your doctor how taking OPTIFAST 900 may affect your medication dose.
- Should you have any concerns, please discuss with your doctor prior to taking OPTIFAST 900

### **My OPTIFAST 900 Prescription:**

OPTIFAST 900, 4 packages per day x \_\_\_\_\_ weeks.

### **My Personal Progress Chart:**

Date							
Number of OPTIFAST 900 Packages Consumed							
Total Fluid Intake (Including OPTIFAST 900)							
Energy Level 1 (low) to 10 (high)							
Mood Level 1 (low) to 10 (high)							
Medication Changes							

### **Contact your healthcare team anytime you have questions or concerns:**

Name

Contact Information

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

### Mandatory steps to stay on track:

- 4 shakes per day, every 4 hours. Add 300mL water, blend in a shaker cup or blender and drink immediately. Add ice cubes if you prefer it cold. Do not heat or add hot liquids to the shakes as it may degrade some nutrients.
- Consume 2L of fluids or 8 glasses per day.
- Acceptable fluids: water, coffee, tea, diet pop, sugar free Jello or popsicles.
- Bouillon 1-2 cubes or broth daily
- Do not consume vitamin C or citrus fruits while on OPTIFAST as it increases risk of kidney stones.

Use allowed foods list and consume a maximum of additional 20 calories per day. Some allowed foods have no calories, so can be consumed as much as tolerated, if still hungry after taking the 4 required OPTIFAST shakes. Taking the full quantity of the OPTIFAST shakes daily is your first priority.

### Getting Started: Nausea & Hunger:

Nausea and hunger occur when you first start and is part of the ketotic state. The body does this to relieve hunger and is subsided in 3-7 days. It is best to stick with the OPTIFAST plan and push through the symptoms. If you do eat foods beyond what is allowed, the body will release a large amount of insulin and result in greater hunger levels. Also, when you get back on track and restart OPTIFAST, your body will go through ketosis again.

### Managing Hunger in General:

- Take the full shakes every 4 hours.
- If you are still hungry, split the 4<sup>th</sup> shake into 2 and have a mid-evening snack.
- Use the allowed foods list to tackle hunger.

### Other Strategies Include:

- Drink adequate quantities of water: 2L per day plus OPTIFAST shakes.
- GERD can sometimes present as hunger: Take Maalox or Mylanta at times of hunger.
- Metamucil tablets may be taken with water as needed, to help provide a fuller feeling. Be careful about adding too much fiber supplement as it can lead to bloating, constipation or diarrhea. Start low, use the least amount needed and increase slowly. Do not exceed the maximum dosage on the bottle.
- Hunger can be emotional. In this case, try to delay the craving for 15 minutes by going for a walk, showering, or brushing your teeth. If you are still hungry after 15 minutes, try the strategies above.



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## **Constipation:**

- Ensure adequate fluids. 2L plus OPTIFAST shakes is 3L of water per day.
- Metamucil 1-2 tablets with meals. Start low, use the least amount needed and increase slowly. Do not exceed the maximum dosage on the bottle. Be careful not to add too much fiber supplement as it can lead to bloating, constipation or diarrhea.
- If this is insufficient, try Milk of Magnesia or Exlax or Restoralax.
- If you are still constipated, discuss at your next medical follow up.

## **Diarrhea:**

- Try Metamucil 1-2 capsules with meals.
- If insufficient, try kapectate or Pepto-Bismol and follow directions on the bottle.
- If severe diarrhea occurs during clinic hours, call the office. If outside clinic hours, go to the emergency room as you may need IV fluids or prescription medications.

## **Bad Breath:**

- Try brushing your teeth or using Listerine strips.
- If you use breath mints, the calories associated contribute to your 20 allowed extra calories per day.

## **Dizziness:**

- If you are on blood pressure medication, they may need a dose reduction. A diuretic should be discontinued while on OPTIFAST. Please inform MD if you are on a diuretic prior to starting OPTIFAST.
- Bouillon cubes: 1-2 per day can help and is recommended to consume daily.

## **Headaches:**

- You can take Tylenol or Advil (if not allergic) and follow the directions on the bottle.
- If you have liver problems, do not exceed 2 grams per day.
- Avoid Advil if you have kidney problems. Please consult MD if you are unsure and need more guidance.

## **Feeling Cold:**

- This is a normal part of weight loss. Please adjust with wearing clothing that keeps you comfortable.

## **Hair Loss:**

- This may occur, but the hair will grow back as part of its normal growth cycle at 0.3mm per day.

## **Hemorrhoids:**

- Use Anusol HC or Tucks as needed.



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## OPTIFAST Recipe Ideas

To change the flavour: calorie-free, sugar-free fluids such as Nestea® singles, other sugar-free flavour packs, or cold decaffeinated coffee, or a few drops of flavouring extracts (sugar-free) may be added.

### **Chocolate & Orange Shake**

250mL water  
Crushed ice  
1 packet chocolate OPTIFAST 900  
1-2 drops orange extract  
Blend until thick

### **Berry Dream**

250mL water  
Crushed ice  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
Berry sugar-free flavour pack  
Blend until thick

### **Chocolate Pudding**

2 ice cubes, crushed  
250mL water  
1 packet chocolate OPTIFAST 900  
Blend until thick

### **Spiced Optifast**

300mL cold water  
Spice, as desired  
1 packet OPTIFAST 900 (any flavour)  
Blend well and serve over ice if desired

### **Cinnamon Apple Shake**

250mL sugar-free apple drink (crystal mix)  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
3 dashes cinnamon  
Blend well

### **Mint Chocolate**

1 prepared chocolate OPTIFAST 900  
¼ tsp mint extract  
1 packet calorie free sweetener  
Blend well

### **Optifast Iced Tea**

200mL cold sugar-free iced tea  
½ tsp lemon juice  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
Crushed Ice  
Whip in blender until frothy

Spice	Vanilla Shake	Chocolate Shake
Allspice	Pinch	
Cinnamon	Pinch	1/8 tsp
Cloves	Pinch	Pinch
Ginger	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp
Nutmeg	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp



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## Refreshing Recipes

OPTIFAST 900 powder products are available in chocolate and vanilla. They mix quickly and easily with water and other liquids.



### **Preparing Powder Products**

#### **Ingredients**

300mL cold water

1 packet OPTIFAST 900 (any flavour)

Directions:

Pour cold water into a shaker or blender. Add contents of 1 OPTIFAST 900 packet. Shake vigorously for 15-30 seconds or blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Makes 1 serving.

#### **Sweetened Beverage**

If desired, noncaloric sweetener may be added to the prepared beverage. For each serving, add the amount of noncaloric sweetener equal to ½ tsp table sugar.

#### **Pudding Texture**

Follow recipe for mixing product using ½ of the water. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours prior to consumption.

#### **Helpful Hints**

- The prepared beverage tastes best when consumed immediately after preparation.
- Charts with suggested flavour combinations of product and diet soda, flavouring extracts and spices are provided in the following sections to help you develop your own favourite beverage and add variety to your dietary prescription.
- Do not heat or add hot liquids to the shakes as it may degrade some nutrients.
- Carbonated beverages mixed with the OPTIFAST 900 powder should be mixed in a blender or stirred by hand. It should not be prepared in a shaker.





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## Flavoured Beverages

### Ingredients

300mL cold water  
Flavouring extract, as desired  
1 packet OPTIFAST 900 (any flavour)

### Directions

Pour cold water and flavouring extract into a shaker or blender. Add contents of product packet. Shake vigorously for 15-30 seconds or blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Serve over ice if desired. Makes 1 serving.

Flavouring Extract	Vanilla	Chocolate
Almond	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp*
Anise	1 drop	1/8 tsp
Banana	1/8 tsp	¼ tsp*
Brandy	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp
Cherry	½ tsp	¼ tsp*
Chocolate	½ tsp	1/8 tsp*
Coconut	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp
Maple	1/8 tsp	
Mint	1 drop	1 drop*
Orange	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp
Peppermint	1 drop	1 drop*
Root beer	1/8 tsp	
Rum	1/8 tsp	1/8 tsp
Sherry	½ tsp	¼ tsp
Strawberry	½ tsp	
Vanilla	1/8 tsp	
Wintergreen	2 drops	

\*These flavourings are best when used with noncaloric sweetener. For each serving, add the amount of noncaloric sweetener equal to ½ tsp table sugar.

### Sugar Free Flavouring Syrups

Try adding 1-2 tbsp of the following to one serving of OPTIFAST 900:

- Sugar free chocolate, strawberry, or caramel syrup
- Sugar free maple syrup (add 2 drops almond or black walnut extract for a maple nut flavour)
- Sugar free flavouring syrups (e.g. Torani® flavouring syrups). Some popular flavours include Irish cream, hazelnut, raspberry, caramel, almond, and orange

### Flavoured Slush

Follow recipe above using any of the recommended flavour combinations. Freeze 1.5 to 2 hours or until semisolid. Place in blender and blend until slush consistency.



## Sparkling Soda

Atreyi Mukherji, MD, 2020

Reference: Optifast® Medical Monitoring Guidelines (2019), Nestle Health Science Canada





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## Ingredients

12oz diet soda, flavour of choice  
1 packet OPTIFAST 900 (any flavour)

## Directions

Pour diet soda into blender. Add contents of packet. Blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Serve over ice if desired. Makes 1 serving.

Diet Soda	Vanilla	Chocolate
Black cherry	x	x
Cherry cola	x	x
Cola	x	x
Creme soda	x	x
Dr. Pepper	x	x
Fresca	x	
Ginger ale		x
Grape	x	
Grapefruit	x	
Lemon-lime	x	
Orange	x	
Raspberry	x	x
Root beer	x	x
Strawberry	x	x

## Sparkling Slush

Follow recipe above using any of the recommended flavour combinations. Freeze 1.5 to 2 hours or until semisolid. Place in blender and blend until slush consistency.

## Beverage Recipes

### Old Fashioned Root Beer

12 oz diet root beer, well chilled  
1/8 tsp root beer extract  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
Pinch of clove, ground  
Pour diet root beer and root beer extract into blender. Add contents of OPTIFAST 900 packet and clove. Blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Serve over ice if desired. Makes 1 serving.

### Old Fashioned Root Beer Slush

Follow recipe above. Freeze 1.5 to 2 hours or until semisolid. Place in blender and blend until slush consistency. Makes 1 serving.

### Pina Colada

12 oz orange soda  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
1/8-1/4 tsp coconut extract  
1/8-1/4 tsp pineapple extract  
Blend together. Place in freezer for 1.5 to 2 hours until slushy. Blend again, pour into a glass and enjoy. Makes 1 serving.



Atreyi Mukherji, MD, 2020

Reference: Optifast® Medical Monitoring Guidelines (2019), Nestle Health Science Canada



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## **Creamy Coffee Irish Cream**

300mL cold water  
1 packet OPTIFAST 900 (any flavour)  
1-1 ½ tsp instant coffee  
1-2 tsp sugar free Irish cream flavouring syrup (or another preferred sugar free flavouring)  
Pour water and Irish cream flavouring into blender. Add contents of OPTIFAST 900 packet and instant coffee. Blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Serve over ice if desired. Makes 1 serving.

## **Hot Chocolate Surprise**

300mL cold water  
1 packet chocolate OPTIFAST 900  
¼ ts coconut extract (or another preferred extract)  
1 packet noncaloric sweetener  
Pour water and coconut extract into blender. Add contents of OPTIFAST 900 packet and noncaloric sweetener. Blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Serve over ice if desired. Makes 1 serving.

## **OPTIFAST Daiquiri (non-alcoholic)**

300mL cold water  
¾-1 cup crushed ice  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
½ tsp pure lime extract  
1 tsp imitation or pure rum extract  
Pour water and extracts into blender. Add contents of OPTIFAST 900 packet along with ice. Blend until mixture is thick and ice is no longer in chunks. Makes 1 serving.

## **Cafe au Lait**

300mL prepared coffee, chilled  
¼ tsp cinnamon  
Noncaloric sweetener (equal to ½ tsp table sugar)  
1 packet vanilla OPTIFAST 900  
Pour coffee, cinnamon and sweetener into blender. Add contents of OPTIFAST 900 packet. Blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Makes 1 serving.

## **Mocha Java**

300mL prepared coffee, chilled  
Noncaloric sweetener (equal to ½ tsp table sugar)  
1 packet chocolate OPTIFAST 900  
Pour coffee and sweetener into blender. Add contents of OPTIFAST 900 packet. Blend at lowest speed for 5 seconds until dissolved. Serve over ice if desired. Makes 1 serving.



## **Tea**

Follow recipe above substituting 300mL of prepared and chilled mellow mint tea for coffee. Makes 1 serving.



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## OPTIFAST VLCD Program

### **Vegetable and Food Allowance**

The recommended allowed vegetables on the OPTIFAST VLCD Program are low starch or low carbohydrate and low calorie. The table below lists what vegetables are recommended while on the OPTIFAST VLCD Program.

The OPTIFAST VLCD Program calls for at least 2 cups a day of allowed vegetables, but doubling that quantity makes little difference in your weight loss as long as you stick to the list of recommended allowable vegetables. They are great for hydration, extra fiber, vitamins, and adding bulk to your diet.

The vegetables also provide real food to chew and keep your diet interesting beyond the OPTIFAST VLCD products. Eating vegetables during the program is an important part of helping with your transition onto a balanced, calorie controlled diet after you have eliminated all OPTIFAST VLCD products.

We do not recommend deviating from the list as other foods may have a higher carbohydrate content and could affect ketosis and therefore your weight loss progress. If there is a food not listed that you are unsure about, please consult your healthcare professional first before having it as part of your OPTIFAST VLCD program.

Additional low energy foods are also allowed whilst following OPTIFAST VLCD Program. These are designed to add variety to your meals and assist in compliance. See the list below of additional allowances permitted during the OPTIFAST VLCD Program.

### **Low Starch Vegetables**

#### **Allowed:**

- |                    |  |              |
|--------------------|--|--------------|
| ✓ Alfalfa sprouts  | ✓ Celery                               | ✓ Radishes   |
| ✓ Asparagus        | ✓ Cucumber                             | ✓ Shallots   |
| ✓ Bean sprouts     | ✓ Eggplant                             | ✓ Silverbeet |
| ✓ Boy choy         | ✓ Green beans                          | ✓ Snow peas  |
| ✓ Broccoli         | ✓ Konjac noodles (slim<br>pasta range) | ✓ Spinach    |
| ✓ Brussels sprouts | ✓ Lettuce (all types)                  | ✓ Squash     |
| ✓ Cabbage          | ✓ Leeks                                | ✓ Tomatoes   |
| ✓ Capsicum         | ✓ Mushrooms                            | ✓ Watercress |
| ✓ Carrots          | ✓ Onions                               | ✓ Zucchini   |
| ✓ Cauliflower      |  |              |



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## Avoid:

- ✗ Corn
- ✗ Green peas
- ✗ Legumes
- ✗ Lentils
- ✗ Potato
- ✗ Sweet potato
- ✗ Parsnip
- ✗ Pumpkin
- ✗ Turnip

## Soups

### Allowed:

- ✓ Bonox (in moderation)
- ✓ Miso soup
- ✓ Stock cubes
- ✓ Vegetable soups made from allowed vegetables

### Avoid:

- ✗ All other soups

## Sauces

### Allowed:

- ✓ Lemon & lime juice
- ✓ Soy sauce (in moderation)
- ✓ Tobasco sauce
- ✓ Vinegar
- ✓ Worcestershire sauce
- ✓ Chilli
- ✓ Diet, oil free or fat free salad dressings
- ✓ Mustard
- ✓ Tomato paste

### Avoid:

- ✗ Cream & dairy based sauces
- ✗ High calorie simmer sauces & dressings

## Herbs & Spices

### Allowed:

- ✓ All spice
- ✓ Basil
- ✓ Celery flakes
- ✓ Chilli
- ✓ Chives
- ✓ Cinnamon
- ✓ Cloves
- ✓ Coriander
- ✓ Cumin
- ✓ Curry powder
- ✓ Dill
- ✓ Fennel
- ✓ Garlic
- ✓ Ginger
- ✓ Lite salt
- ✓ Mint
- ✓ Parsley
- ✓ Pepper
- ✓ Rosemary
- ✓ Sage
- ✓ Thyme
- ✓ Turmeric
- ✓ Taragon

## Miscellaneous

### Allowed:

- ✓ Artificial sweeteners
- ✓ Diet jelly
- ✓ Flavour essences
- ✓ Diet toppings
- ✓ Sugar free lollies & gum



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## Low Energy Drinks

### Allowed:

- ✓ Water
- ✓ Soda water
- ✓ Diet soft drinks

- ✓ Plain mineral water
- ✓ Tea & coffee (30mL skim milk & no sugar)
- ✓ Herbal teas

### Avoid:

- ✗ Fruit juice
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Soft drinks

Once you have progressed onto the Active 2 level of the OPTIFAST VLCD Program you can start to introduce dairy and fruit. Please see below for serving sizes for both your dairy and fruit that can be included in Active 2, Active 1, and Maintenance Levels of the OPTIFAST VLCD Program.

## Fruit Servings

### Allowed:

- ✓ Apple (1 small)
- ✓ Apricots (2)
- ✓ Blueberries (¾ cup)
- ✓ Canned fruit in natural juice (120g)
- ✓ Cherries (15)
- ✓ Grapes (½ cup)
- ✓ Kiwi (1)
- ✓ Lychees (canned in light syrup, 4)
- ✓ Mandarin (1-2)
- ✓ Mango (½)
- ✓ Orange (1 medium)
- ✓ Passion fruit (4)
- ✓ Peach (1 medium)
- ✓ Pear (1 small)
- ✓ Pineapple (2 slices)
- ✓ Plum (2 small)
- ✓ Prunes (3)
- ✓ Rhubarb (200g cooked)
- ✓ Strawberries (1.5 punnet)

## Dairy Servings (100 calories)

### Allowed:

- ✓ Cottage cheese (1/3 cup)
- ✓ Low fat ice cream (1 scoop)
- ✓ Low fat milk (250mL)
- ✓ Low fat yogurt (150g)
- ✓ Reduced fat cheese (25% reduced fat, 30g)



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## OPTIFAST & Bariatric Surgery

### Why should I take OPTIFAST 900 before my bariatric surgery?

Taking OPTIFAST 900 will help you manage your weight by controlling the number of calories you consume each day while supplying the nutrition you need to get ready for surgery.

### Why does my doctor want me to use OPTIFAST 900 before my bariatric surgery?

OPTIFAST 900 may help with losing weight before your surgery which can help reduce the size of your liver and can lower your risk of complications during and after your surgery. As you prepare for surgery, drinking OPTIFAST 900 will provide you with energy, vitamins and minerals, and high-quality protein. Higher protein weight-loss diets have been shown to preserve muscle mass and help with the feeling of fullness.

### How long will I take OPTIFAST 900?

Depending on your medical assessment and your weight, your doctor will advise you to take OPTIFAST 900 as your only food intake for 2-6 weeks.

### What is OPTIFAST 900?

OPTIFAST 900 is a high protein, complete nutrition, meal replacement drink. Each 54g package of OPTIFAST 900 powder is mixed with 300mL of water. 4 packages per day contain:

- ✓ 90g of high quality protein
- ✓ 900 calories
- ✓ Moderate amount of fat (30%) and carbohydrates (30%)
- ✓ 16g of dietary fiber
- ✓ 27 essential vitamins and minerals.





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## Tips to Help You Be Successful with Taking OPTIFAST 900 Before Your Surgery

### Food Tips

- For optimal success, no other food should be eaten while taking OPTIFAST 900. Talk to your dietitian or doctor for more information on what extra foods may be right for you.
- Follow the OPTIFAST 900 package for mixing instructions. As an option, you may prefer to add less water to OPTIFAST 900 powder to create a thicker textured pudding-like product or you can add more water for a thinner drink.
- You may enjoy your OPTIFAST 900 best when it is served very cold or with ice.
- For variety, consider adding flavorings such as mint, almond, vanilla, or other extracts.
- Plenty of extra water/fluid is recommended throughout the day.
- Make sure you drink at least 2 liters of fluid in addition to the water in your OPTIFAST 900 drinks. Non-calorie and/or diet beverages and black tea or coffee may be taken as this extra fluid.
- Although OPTIFAST 900 contains 16g of dietary fiber in 4 servings, additional fiber supplements may be required to help you with bowel management. Talk to your doctor or dietitian for information on what fiber supplement is right for you.
- It is important you drink all of the OPTIFAST 900 that your doctor or dietitian has prescribed.

### Staying on the Schedule

- Take OPTIFAST 900 at a similar time each day.
- Spacing your OPTIFAST 900 intake throughout the way will help control hunger.

### Eating with Others

- Try not to buy foods that are difficult for you to avoid.
- When at home, try to limit situations that would cause you to want to eat food.
- When you are with your family, ask them to limit snacking when you are in their company.
- If you are invited out with friends, meet them for coffee or tea, or a non-caloric beverage, or maybe a fun activity unrelated to food.

