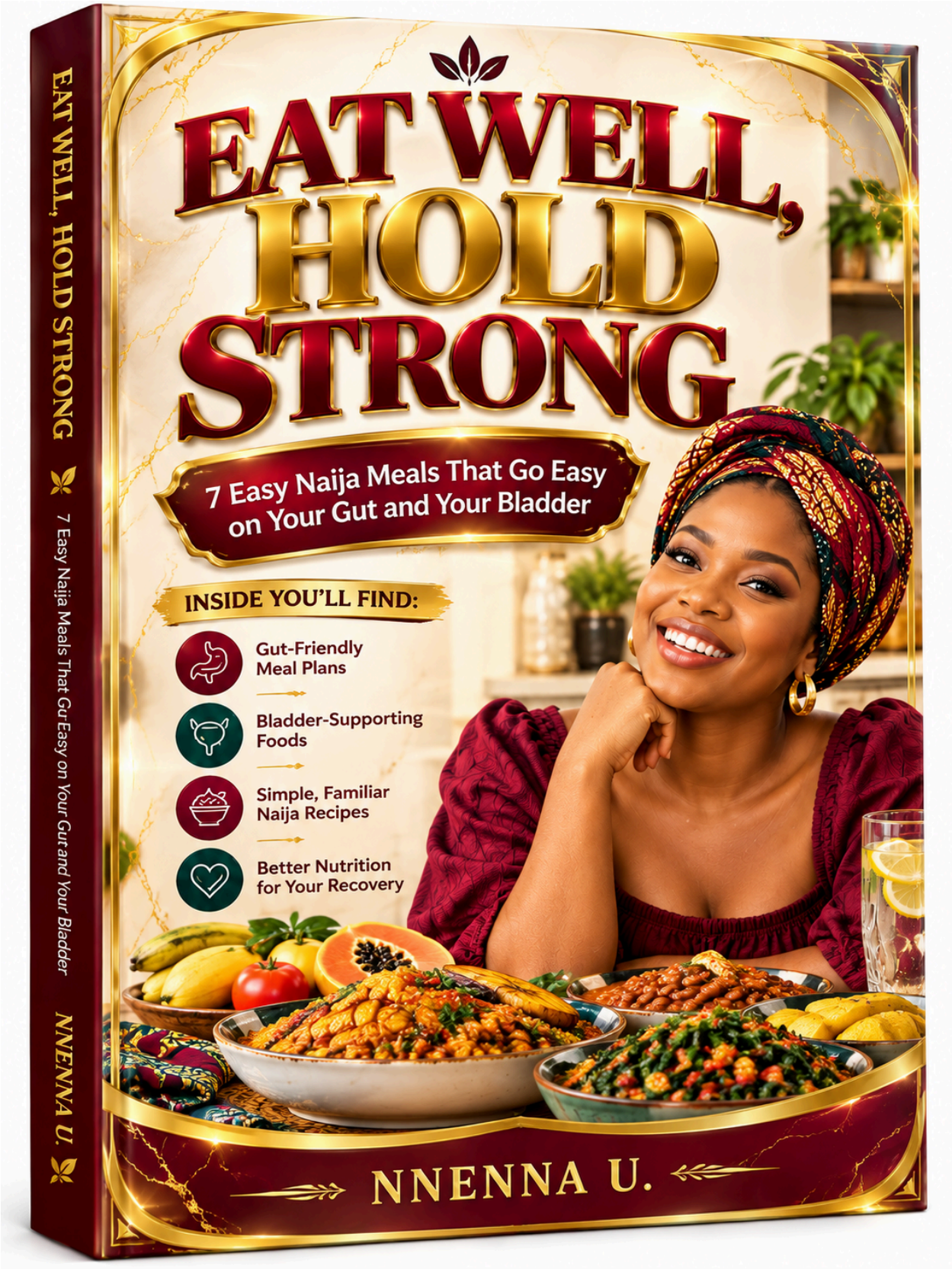

EAT WELL, HOLD STRONG
7 Easy Naija Meals That Go Easy on Your Gut and Your Bladder
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EAT WELL, HOLD STRONG

7 Easy Naija Meals That Go Easy on Your Gut and Your Bladder

Come into the kitchen with me, my sister. I want to tell you something that surprises many mothers.

You can do your ten minutes every day, practise the Knack, and still slow your own progress without knowing it. Not because of what you do in the bedroom. Because of what happens in the kitchen and on the toilet.

Remember what I said in Chapter 6. When you are constipated, you strain. When you strain, you push hard against the very muscles you are trying to rebuild. And some drinks can irritate the bladder and make the urge stronger.

So this little plan is simple. It helps your gut move easily and it keeps your bladder calm. Every meal uses food you already know and can buy at your local market.

Four Simple Rules

You do not need a fancy diet. Just these four things:

1. **Add fibre to every meal.** Beans, vegetables, fruit, oats, and whole grains keep your bowels moving softly.

2. **Drink water steadily.** Small sips through the day. Your urine should be pale yellow, like light lemonade.

3. **Add plenty of vegetables to your soups.** A swallow is not the problem. A swallow with very little vegetable is.

4. **Test your triggers, one at a time.** Some drinks irritate some women. We will find yours in a calm, simple way.

One important note. You may be breastfeeding or still recovering from birth, and your body needs enough food. This is **not** a diet to lose weight. Do not skip meals or eat too little. Eat well, eat enough, and eat well-balanced meals.

Your 7-Day Plan

Use these as ideas, not strict rules. Swap meals around, and change anything that does not suit your budget, your allergies, or your family. Add protein like fish, eggs, chicken, or beans to your taste.

Day 1

- **Breakfast:** Oats cooked with water or milk, topped with sliced banana
- **Lunch:** Beans and ripe plantain with a side of steamed ugu
- **Dinner:** Vegetable soup with a small portion of your usual swallow
- **Snack:** A slice of pawpaw

Day 2

- **Breakfast:** Moi moi with a little pap
- **Lunch:** Ofada or brown rice with stew and boiled eggs, plus a side of cabbage
- **Dinner:** Efo riro with plenty of vegetables and a small swallow
- **Snack:** An orange or two

Day 3

- **Breakfast:** Boiled yam with egg sauce loaded with tomatoes and spinach
- **Lunch:** Beans porridge with unripe plantain
- **Dinner:** Grilled or steamed fish with sautéed okra and a little rice
- **Snack:** A handful of groundnuts and a small apple

Day 4

- **Breakfast:** Oats with groundnuts and a little honey
- **Lunch:** Jollof rice (not too oily) with a big side of coleslaw or salad and grilled chicken
- **Dinner:** Okra soup with a small swallow
- **Snack:** Watermelon

Day 5

- **Breakfast:** Akara baked or lightly fried, with a little pap
- **Lunch:** Unripe plantain porridge with fish and ugu
- **Dinner:** Egusi soup with plenty of vegetables and a small swallow
- **Snack:** Pawpaw or pear

Day 6

- **Breakfast:** Whole-grain bread with scrambled eggs and tomatoes
- **Lunch:** Beans and brown rice with vegetable stew
- **Dinner:** Light fish pepper soup with boiled unripe plantain
- **Snack:** Cucumber slices and a small banana

Day 7

- **Breakfast:** Oats or pap with milk and fruit
- **Lunch:** Moi moi with steamed vegetables and a small portion of rice
- **Dinner:** Vegetable soup with a small swallow and grilled fish
- **Snack:** Your favourite fruit

Swallow and Soup, Done Right

Many mothers fear swallow, and I understand. But the swallow is not your enemy. It is just a bit heavy on fibre-light carbohydrate, and the soup you eat with it makes the difference.

Here is how to make it work for you:

- **Fill the soup with vegetables.** Ugu, spinach, okra, bitter leaf, or scent leaf. More leaves than meat.
- **Keep the swallow portion modest.** Think of it as a side, not the main show.
- **Choose fibre-friendly swallows when you can.** Plantain flour (unripe plantain) swallow, and whole-grain or oat options, give you more fibre than some others.
- **Eat slowly and drink water** with your meal.
- **Add a fruit afterwards.** Pawpaw is an old favourite for many mothers.

The Bladder-Irritant Swap List

You do not need to give up everything you love. You just need to find out whether any of these bother your bladder. Test them **one at a time** for a week, using your bladder diary from Chapter 4.

If you usually drink	Try instead
Strong tea or coffee	Weak tea, or warm water with a slice of ginger
Fizzy drinks (cola, fanta)	Plain water, or water with cucumber or mint
Malt and very sweet drinks	Plain water, or a small glass of diluted fruit juice
Energy drinks	Water, and rest when you are tired
Alcohol	Water, or a non-alcoholic option you enjoy
Very sour or acidic drinks	Plain water, or a mild fruit like pawpaw

If cutting one of these makes no difference, put it back. If it does, you have found one of your triggers. Keep a simple note of what you learn.

A Simple Shopping List

Here is a short list for one week:

- **Grains and swallows:** oats, brown rice or ofada rice, unripe plantain, whole-grain bread
- **Protein:** beans, eggs, fish, chicken, groundnuts
- **Vegetables:** ugu, spinach, okra, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumber, carrots
- **Fruit:** pawpaw, oranges, watermelon, pears, apples, bananas
- **Extras:** ginger, groundnuts, a little honey

You do not need to buy everything. Start with what you can afford, and build up.

Small Habits That Help

- **Eat breakfast.** The first meal of the day often gets your bowels moving.
- **Respond when your body says "go."** Do not hold it in.
- **Sit properly on the toilet.** Feet on a small stool, lean forward, relax, and do not strain.
- **Take a short walk** after a meal if you can. Even ten minutes helps.
- **Be patient.** Your gut may take a few days to settle into a new rhythm.

When to See a Doctor

Food can help, but it cannot fix everything. Please see a doctor if you have severe or long-lasting constipation, blood in your stool, strong pain, unexplained weight loss, or if you have a health condition like diabetes or a food allergy and want to change how you eat. Your doctor can tailor this plan to you.

Your Kitchen Is on Your Side

I want you to leave with this thought. Looking after your pelvic floor is not only about exercise. It is also about gentle, kind choices, many times a day. A bowl of beans. A glass of water. A slice of pawpaw. A calmer visit to the toilet.

Each one is small. Together, they make your life easier and protect the strength you are building.

So go and enjoy your food, my sister. You deserve to eat well, and to hold strong.