

Nutrition Support in COPD

You have been given this leaflet because you are not eating well and are losing weight, and maybe becoming weaker.

Your diet and nutritional intake are very important when you have COPD. This is the time to increase your energy and protein intake to help you regain weight, feel better and stronger. Follow the advice in this leaflet, but if you continue to struggle with your diet and lose weight, speak to your doctor or nurse for further help.

Diet and Breathing



It is common that it becomes difficult to eat and swallow when you are very short of breath.

Some people find it easier to chew and swallow softer, wetter foods at these times, e.g. casseroles, milky puddings, ice creams.

If you find you are eating less because you are short of breath you may find it easier to eat three smaller meals, and have snacks in between meals.

Aim to eat something, or have a milky drink, six times per day.

High Energy Foods



High energy foods are the most helpful types of food to help you gain weight.

High energy foods are those that are high in fat (e.g. chips, fried foods, meat pies), high in sugar (e.g. fizzy drinks, sweets), or high in both sugar and fat (e.g. chocolate, cream cakes).

Include in your diet as often as possible.

Tips for Improving Your Intake

When you are unable to get enough energy and nutrients into your diet to maintain your weight and strength, the following tips will help you increase your energy intake:

- Choose full fat or high energy options e.g. (whole milk) and avoid the lower fat varieties
- Add grated or cream cheese to mashed potato, soups, sauces, scrambled eggs, baked beans
- Add cream to sauces, scrambled eggs, soups, mashed potatoes, desserts, cereals and porridge
- Use mayonnaise or dressing in sandwiches and on salads
- Add extra butter or margarine to vegetables, potatoes, scrambled eggs and bread
- Make fortified milk – whisk 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder to one pint of milk; add this to drinks, puddings, cereals, soups and sauces
- Add extra honey, syrup and jams
- Try to take nourishing drinks like smoothies, soups, fruit juice, milkshakes, hot chocolate, energy drinks
- Don't feel that you need to stick to three meals a day, try to take small meals and snacks or nourishing drinks between meals
- Use convenience foods when you don't feel up to preparing foods from scratch, have some standbys in the freezer or cupboard. Good store cupboard ideas: long life milk, savoury snacks, biscuits, rice puddings, corned beef, baked beans, macaroni cheese, soups, tinned puddings and custard
- Don't fill up on drinks before or during your meal
- Eat more of the type of foods that you feel like, when you aren't feeling great don't worry about having the perfect diet
- Try not to miss meals as you will feel even worse.



Coping With a Dry Mouth

You may find you have a dry mouth from time to time. Using oxygen, nebulisers or inhalers can sometimes cause this. It can make it difficult to chew and swallow foods, and sometimes it can lead to taste changes. Tips to help:

- Choose softer foods or moist foods, e.g. minced beef in shepherd's pie rather than individual pieces of meat
- Suck fruit sweets, ice cubes made with fruit juice or squash, chew sugar-free gum
- Your doctor may prescribe some pastilles or saliva sprays if the problem continues
- If you are finding it difficult to swallow or are frequently coughing during meals, mention it to your doctor or nurse, they will be able to give you advice.

Coping With Taste Changes

If your taste changes you can lose your appetite and may not feel like eating your normal foods. Tips to help:

- If you are using a steroid inhaler always rinse your mouth and gargle with water after use to prevent oral thrush
- Look after your mouth, regularly clean your teeth/dentures, use a mouthwash if that helps, and try and floss too
- Focus on the foods you enjoy but don't be afraid to try new foods
- Try sharp or spicy foods, as they have a stronger taste
- Experiment with different seasonings and sauces etc
- If you have gone off a particular food, try it again after a couple of weeks as your taste may have changed again.

Nutritional Support

If you are struggling to eat enough you may also be given a nutritional supplement to try.

These ready-made products provide you with energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.

They are designed to boost your intake in between meals; they are not designed to replace your meals.

There are a range of products that you may be offered, which come in a variety of styles (e.g. milk tasting, juice tasting) and flavours.

You will be advised on how many drinks to take during the day.

Monitor Your Weight

It is a good idea to keep an eye on your weight as it is a good indicator of what is happening in your body. If you can, weigh yourself monthly.

If you are unable to weigh yourself be aware of visual signs of your weight dropping, for example jewellery and clothes becoming looser.

If you continue to lose weight seek advice from your doctor or nurse.

Eating and Exercise

If you are living with COPD it is very important to keep as active as possible, this helps your lungs and also the rest of your body to stay strong.

Make sure you regularly have high energy snacks throughout the day if you are increasing your activity.

Ask your doctor or nurse for advice.