

Appetite Changes



“Many days I’m just not hungry. I find it easier to eat 5 small meals, instead of 3 big meals each day. My nurse told me about foods that can help me keep up my strength.”

What are appetite changes?

Two common changes you may notice are feeling less hungry and finding that some foods may taste different.

- **Eat well to help your body stay strong.**
- **Let your doctor or nurse know if you lose weight.**

Try these tips to make eating easier:

Set meal times and routines.

Eat a little, even if you’re not hungry.

- It may help to eat 5 or 6 small meals each day, instead of 3 large meals.
- Try new foods to keep up your interest in food.
- Eat with family or friends, or watch television while you eat.
- Choose foods that are high in calories or protein like those listed on the back of this sheet.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about seasonings that may help some foods taste better.
- If food tastes like metal, eat with plastic forks or spoons.

Be active.

Being active may help you feel more hungry.

- Take a short walk each day.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse about exercises that can help you.



Drink liquids.

Getting enough to drink is important, but don’t fill up on liquids during meals.

- Drink milkshakes or soups that are easy to swallow.
- Keep track of how much you eat and drink each day. Then talk with your doctor or nurse to make sure you are eating and drinking enough.

Keep this list on your refrigerator.

Eat more of these foods and drinks that are high in calories or protein.

Soups	Drinks	Main meals and snacks	Sweets	Extras
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream soups • Soups with lentils or beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or red) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some instant breakfast drinks • Milkshakes • Fruit smoothies • Whole milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken • Lentils or beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or red) • Eggs • Fish • Nuts, seeds, and wheat germ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custard • Ice cream • Muffins • Pudding • Yogurt (plain or vanilla) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter, margarine, or oil added to foods • Cottage cheese, cream cheese, and sour cream • Some liquid meal replacements • Peanut butter • Powdered milk added to foods

Ask your doctor or nurse what foods and drinks are best for you.



Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What foods should I eat?
3. Are there high-protein drinks or vitamins that can help me?
4. How much water, or other liquids, should I drink each day?
5. What exercises can help increase my appetite?



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How can we help?

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: www.cancer.gov

Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:

www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects

