

Living with Lung Cancer

Practical Tips for Eating

Good nutrition when living with cancer is important. Some of the symptoms associated with your lung cancer and its treatment may affect your appetite or your ability to eat. Talk to your dietitian or other healthcare professional who should be able to help you. This leaflet provides some practical help and advice.

Have you lost your appetite?

There may be times when you feel unable to eat, can only eat a little or are too tired to prepare or cook food; this is not uncommon. Thinking about food can seem overwhelming when you are feeling unwell. But it is important that your diet is as varied and nourishing as possible. At these times, you may find it easier to eat smaller meals with frequent snacks between meals. Other hints and tips include:

- Eat something small and frequently during the day e.g. yogurt, piece of cake, ice cream, cheese and crackers. Have a 'snack' plate around
- Aim for 3 small meals and 3 snacks each day
- Have nourishing drinks in between meals e.g. milkshake, fruit smoothie, hot chocolate made with milk
- Stock up on different tinned foods e.g. tinned baked beans, spaghetti, meat, fish and fruit and milk puddings, so that you always have easy to prepare foods available
- If you have a freezer – stock up on frozen or ready meals. Add some frozen vegetables i.e. peas, sweetcorn or mixed vegetables, to make a more balanced meal
- Try ready-made meals such as shepherd's pie, macaroni cheese and pasta dishes that are nourishing and easy to cook
- Food does not have to be cooked to be nutritious. Try cheese and biscuits or a sandwich with cold meat, salad cream or mayonnaise
- Put small amounts of food on your plate or use a smaller plate then it will not look so daunting
- Treat yourself to your favourite foods
- Take time to eat and make the most of the times when you do feel like eating
- Fresh air can help to stimulate the appetite – if you are not very mobile try and sit by an open window prior to mealtimes.
- Having a little bit of alcohol before meals can also help stimulate your appetite but check this with your healthcare professional first

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How do you fortify your foods and drinks?

If you are eating less than normal for you and/or you have lost weight it is important to make sure that what you are eating is nourishing. Here are some hints and tips to help increase your energy and protein intake:

- Try to use full fat milk which you can fortify with skimmed milk powder and full fat milk products like cheese, yogurt etc.
- Spread butter, olive oil spread or margarine generously on bread and add it to cooked vegetables
- Add cream or grated cheese to soups, mashed potato, cooked vegetables and pasta dishes
- Add cream, evaporated milk, condensed milk or ice cream to puddings
- Add sugar, jam or honey to cereals, porridge, yogurts and puddings

You also need to make sure that you are eating a variety of foods including fruit and vegetables so that you get all the vitamins and minerals you need. If you are struggling to do this please talk to your dietitian or other healthcare professional for advice as they may be able to recommend prescribable nutritional supplement drinks, puddings or powders that can help to improve your nutritional intake.

Have you been following a special diet?

You may have already been following a special diet; perhaps you have high cholesterol or diabetes; talk to your dietitian or other healthcare professional for advice on how any dietary restrictions may change now that you are living with lung cancer.

Help and support are there for you

Discuss any problems or worries you have with your healthcare professional; they will be able to provide you with help and advice. They will also be able to provide information about local organisations that can support you.

For further information about Nutrition in Cancer visit www.nutritionincancer.co.uk

Further support is available from the following associations:

Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation

0333 323 7200

www.roycastle.org

Macmillan Cancer Support

0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk