

Coping with a small appetite

People can experience a loss of appetite as a result of a number of factors such as medications, treatment or symptoms like pain and nausea. This document is designed to give you advice if your appetite is poor and you are not eating as well as usual.

Importance of nutrition

Trying to improve your nutrition is important for a number of reasons:

- To stop or prevent further weight loss
- To improve energy levels and ability to cope with treatment
- To support a good immune system and healing process
- To help provide structure and 'normality' to your day and bring a sense of wellbeing

General tips for coping

- A large portion can be overwhelming and can put people off eating altogether. Only put a small amount on your plate at a time – use a side plate if possible. You can always have more if you are able to
- Although fluid is very important, it can also fill you up. Drink between meals rather than with meals to avoid filling up on liquid
- Focus on foods you enjoy and can tolerate, when you feel able to eat them. Often people feel pressured to eat in a conventional way, having breakfast food at breakfast time for example. Eat whatever you fancy when you are hungry or feel able to

- Make every mouthful count by ensuring that your food contains maximum calories. This can be done by adding things such as extra oil, butter, cream and cheese to food
- If your appetite is poor then eating little and often can be easier to tolerate than large meals in the standard breakfast, lunch, dinner pattern.
- Drinks should contain calories where possible. Choose drinks such as milk, milkshakes, juice and milky tea/coffee/hot chocolate
- It doesn't matter whether you fancy sweet or savoury foods but try to ensure that the sweet foods are as nourishing as they can be. Choose options such as rice pudding, ice cream or custard rather than jellies or sorbets
- In small amounts alcohol can sometimes improve appetite before a meal. Always check with your doctor that this is safe for you to have alcohol if you would like to
- If you are concerned about the nutritional content of your diet you could consider a standard multivitamin. Check with your doctor prior to taking anything that isn't prescribed to ensure it is safe and won't interact with any prescribed medication

Useful items to have at home

It is a good idea to think about foods that you can keep in the house. It is important to have quick and easy options available for when and if you feel hungry or able to tolerate eating.

Cupboard

Dried milk powder for Fortified milk –

Method: Mix 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder into 1 pint of full cream/semi skimmed milk (start with adding the powder to a small amount of the milk and whisk until it's a smooth paste before adding the rest of the pint of milk).

This increases the calories and doubles the protein content of standard milk. It can then be used as standard milk in drinks, cereal, sauces or puddings

Tinned meat and fish – tuna, salmon, pilchards, stews, meatballs

Tinned foods – soup, ravioli, macaroni cheese, beans or beans and sausages

Convenience potatoes Instant mashed potato or tinned new potatoes

Breakfast cereals or instant porridge

Crackers or oatcakes

Sweet spreads – jams, honey, marmalade, chocolate spread

Savoury spreads – peanut or alternative nut butters, sandwich spread, cream cheese or hummus

Biscuits

Cereal bars or flapjacks

Tinned milk puddings – rice pudding, semolina

Tinned fruit in syrup or natural juice

Dried fruit – raisins, apricots, figs, prunes and sultanas

Crisps and nuts

Chocolate and sweets

Drinks

Fruit juice

Milk

Over the counter nutrition drinks – Build Up or Complan

Milkshakes – long life, syrup or powder

Hot chocolate powder – malted drinks or cocoa

Fridge

Cheese – blocks, sliced, grated or full fat cheese spread

Eggs

Cold meats and bacon

Smoked fish

Butter, margarine

Milk – choose full fat

Cold desserts – Mousses, trifle or yoghurts

Freezer

Ready meals

Frozen meats and fish – sausages, breaded fish

Spare loaf of bread or rolls

Frozen fruit and ice cream

Meal ideas

Snacks

Cocktail sausages, sausage rolls, pizza slices, scotch eggs, samosas, pork pie, pepperoni, cheese, quiche or hummus with bread sticks

Crisps/tortilla chips with full fat dips e.g. hummus, sour cream, taramasalata

Breakfast cereals with full cream milk with added sugar honey or fruit

Toast, crumpets, muffins, crumpets, croissants with butter and peanut butter/honey/chocolate spread

Full fat yoghurts, mousses, fruit fools, trifles, custard and milk pudding

Milkshakes, smoothies, or other nourishing drinks

Cheese or full fat cream cheese on crackers

Biscuits and cereal bars

Crisps, chocolate, dried fruit, nuts, Bombay mix and savoury snacks

Light meals

Sandwiches – These can be made from sliced bread, toast, bagels, baguette, chapatti, or pitta bread and filled with cold meats, tinned fish, pate, dahl, hummus, egg, bacon, cheese, peanut butter

On toast – baked beans, cheese, sardines, eggs (poached, boiled, scrambled or fried), avocado. Add plenty of butter or margarine and top with grated cheese

Jacket potatoes – with butter and fillings such as cheese, beans, tuna mayonnaise, chilli con carne, bolognese sauce or hummus

Nutritious soups (homemade or shop bought) if having soup as a meal, choose one that contains meat, fish, cheese, lentils, peas or beans. Try to add cream or butter and have with a bread roll

Pasta meals – instant or microwaved pasta meals

French toast (eggy bread) or omelette – Try with cheese or ham filling

Fried Beef burger, sausage or fish fingers – with buttered bread

Pizza – topped with extra cheese and bacon

Quiche

Ready meals – these can be frozen, chilled, tinned and can be baked or microwaved. Avoid diet/low calorie options

Puddings

Milk puddings such as tinned rice or semolina.

For variety add jam, fresh or tinned fruit, or cinnamon, sultanas and brown sugar

Yoghurts – thick and creamy style, fromage frais, fruit mousse or fool

Sponge puddings with some heated readymade custard

Fruit pie, cake or crumble with cream, ice cream or custard

Waffles or pancakes with maple syrup or chocolate sauce

Cheesecake or sweet pastries with cream

Baked apple or banana with brown sugar and sultanas. Served with custard, cream or ice cream

Full fat Greek yoghurt with honey and soft fruits.

If you have any concerns or would like further advice please speak to your

Dorothy House Professional

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