
Nutrition and COPD

Eating can be hard for some people with COPD. It is important to eat well even during times of illness.

Nutritional challenges with COPD

Problem	Try
Feeling full quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eat small, frequent meals • make every bite count
Feeling tired - fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choose easy to prepare, easy to eat meals • eat small meals more often
Feeling bloated - gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce intake of gassy foods and carbonated beverages • drink liquids between meals • limit use of straws and chewing gum
Shortness of breath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rest before eating • avoid unnecessary movement or talking during a meal • try softer foods that require less chewing
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drink 6 to 8 cups (1½ to 2 litres) of non-caffeinated fluid each day • increase fibre slowly • keep as physically active as you can
Poor appetite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eat 6-8 small meals and snacks daily • choose high calorie, high protein food • use nutrition supplements
Dry mouth or throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drink adequate fluids • have moist foods • follow good mouth care - after using an inhaler as well

It is important to maintain a healthy body weight when you have lung disease. One way to check if your weight is in the healthy range is to find your Body Mass Index or BMI. A dietitian will help you do this.

- With lung disease, a healthy BMI is greater than 21 and less than 25.
- When your BMI is in this range, you are least likely to have health problems related to weight.
- When your BMI is too high, being overweight increases the work of breathing.
- When your BMI is too low, you pick up infections easier.
- When your BMI is too low, you need to gain weight in a healthy way.

Ways to lose weight:

- Portion your meal before sitting down. Your plate should be:
 - ½ plate vegetables
 - ¼ starch such as rice, potatoes
 - ¼ protein such as fish, meat, dairy products
- Practice mindful eating. This means you think about healthy eating. Put your fork or spoon down between mouthfuls so you enjoy the taste of the food. Wait 20 minutes after you eat so your brain can catch up to your stomach and you feel full.
- Limit fat, alcohol and high calorie drinks such as juice, fruit drinks and soda pop.
- Snack on vegetables and fruit. Keep these washed and ready to eat.
- Munch on plain crackers, rye krisps, breadsticks, dry cereal, light popcorn

Ways to gain weight:

If you need to gain weight, follow a high calorie, high protein diet. Increasing protein and calories can:

- Help the body heal
- Rebuild muscle
- Help increase weight or prevent more weight loss

To increase protein:

- Add 1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 ml) of skim milk powder to each ½ to 1 cup (120 to 240 ml) serving of cream soup, pudding, milkshakes, milk, hot chocolate, coffee, hot cereal and mashed potato.
- Eat cheese or add it to pasta, vegetables, potatoes, casseroles, salads, soups, fresh fruit, muffins and crackers.
- Eat yogurt or add it to pie, fruit, cake, milkshakes or smoothies.
- Add eggs to salads, casseroles, sandwiches and soups.
- Eat peanut butter with crackers, fruit or vegetables and milkshakes.
- Add chopped meat, fish or poultry to salads, pasta, omelettes, baked potato and soups.

To increase calories:

- Eat dried fruit or add it to cereal, salads and desserts.
- Make trail mix with dried fruit, nuts and cereal.
- Add cream or homogenized milk to coffee, tea, hot chocolate, milkshakes, cereal, fruit, soups and sauces.
- If blood sugars are normal, add whipping cream to desserts, sugar fresh fruit, eat canned fruit in heavy syrup and snack on ice cream.
- Be generous with fats such as butter, margarine, sour cream, mayonnaise and gravy.

Nutrition supplements

The dietitian may suggest nutrition supplements for you such as Ensure, Boost, Resource, Nestle Instant Breakfast Anytime or store brand supplements. These drinks are a concentrated source of calories and protein and are useful when you are not eating well or need to gain weight.

What about calcium?

Calcium is a mineral needed for building strong bones and teeth throughout life. It is also very important to have when you have lung disease. Some medications such as medrol and prednisone may weaken your bones.

- Physical activity and good nutrition can help keep your bones strong and healthy.
- Adults under 50 years old need 1000 mg of calcium daily.
- Adults over 50 years old need 1200 mg of calcium each day.

Vitamin D and calcium:

- Vitamin D helps to increase calcium absorption. It can be obtained from sunlight on your skin, through foods or in supplements. Food sources of vitamin D include milk, margarine, fish and eggs.

Food sources of calcium:

Common Foods	Portion	Calcium (mg)
Milk, any type	1 cup or 240 mls	300
Hard cheese	1 ounce or 28 g (thumb size)	300
Yogurt, low fat with fruit	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup or 190 mls	200
Processed cheese	56 g or 2 thin slices	300
Cottage cheese	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 125 mls	80
Soy beverage-calcium fortified	1 cup or 240 mls	312
Almonds	1 ounce or 28g	80
Soybeans-cooked	1 cup or 240 mls	185
Sardines with bones	4 or 48 g	183
Pink salmon with bone	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 125 mls	167
Tofu with calcium	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 125 mls	130
Orange juice-calcium fortified	1 cup or 240 mls	300
Broccoli-cooked	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 125 mls	40
Kale	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 125 mls	49

Your doctor or dietitian may recommend calcium and vitamin D supplements to take with a healthy diet.