

Improving Your Nutrition in COPD

This leaflet is intended to provide advice to support individuals with COPD who are experiencing a poor or reduced appetite, unplanned weight loss or are feeling weak and lacking energy.

Key principles for caring for yourself with COPD

- **Eat a varied diet and keep a healthy body weight** – Eating a balanced and varied diet can help prevent and fight infections, keep your body and lungs strong and make it easier to keep your weight in a healthy range. This leaflet gives you some more information on how you might achieve this when your appetite is poor or you are feeling weak and lacking in energy. If you continue to lose weight and feel you are struggling to eat enough and struggling to carry out everyday activities such as shopping, working and getting out and about, speak to your doctor, nurse or community pharmacist
- **Keep active** - keeping as active as possible helps to keep your lungs and the rest of your body strong. If you haven't been very active, try to gently increase the amount of activity you are doing. It doesn't have to be strenuous - try to take up activities you enjoy, walk wherever you can, climb the stairs rather than take the lift. Ask your local doctor's surgery about local activity programmes that might help get you started, be safe and keep you motivated
- **Control your breathing** – speak to your respiratory physiotherapist or nurse about breathing techniques and positions that might help you – further information can be found at www.acprc.org.uk/media/521pay15/gl-05acbt-1.pdf
- **Take care of yourself** – make sure you are getting enough rest and sleep and that you consider your emotional wellbeing - anxiety and depression are common reactions to living with a long-term condition. If you are concerned talk to your health care professional about counselling and medications
- **If you smoke try to give up** - this a fantastic step to increasing your health and fitness. Your 'stop smoking journey' will in time improve your taste and sense of smell making food more pleasurable. Discuss with your healthcare professional what smoking cessation services are available to you or help point you to the right professional support and appropriate medication to succeed
- **Monitor your progress** - a self-management plan, that you have agreed with your healthcare professional, can help you manage your COPD and help with your condition, symptoms, medication and flare ups. You can check to see if you are losing weight too quickly or need further help and advice on your diet by using the self-screening tool at www.malnutritionselfscreening.org



Monitor Your Weight Monthly

- Keep an eye on your weight when you are unwell and also check it at least every month when you are well as it reflects whether you are getting enough nourishment from your food and drink choices and eating patterns



- If you are unable to weigh yourself, be aware of signs of your weight decreasing, for example jewellery and clothes becoming looser
- If you continue to lose weight over several weeks or months, seek advice from your doctor, nurse, or dietitian
- If you are overweight, it is still important that your weight is monitored and it is important to mention if you have lost weight without meaning to. You may not need to regain the weight you have lost but losing it too quickly may leave you feeling weak, tired and prone to infections



Tips for a Healthy Balanced Diet especially when appetite is poor or you are losing weight unplanned

- Protein Foods are required for healthy muscles (including those that help with breathing), and as a fuel for the immune system. Examples include meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses, nuts, seeds and tofu

Tips for getting enough Protein

- Try to eat some protein at each meal
- Foods that provide protein include meat, fish, eggs, dairy products (cheese, yogurt, milk), nuts, tofu, beans, lentils
- More information on adding protein to your diet can be found at www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/proteinideas.pdf
- If you are finding it difficult to consume regular protein rich foods, talk to your healthcare professional about ways to add additional protein to your diet: this may include the use of oral nutritional supplements (nutrition drinks with a high protein content)



- **Carbohydrate Foods** provide energy and fibre. Try to include a starchy food at each meal examples include potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, cereals and puddings
- **Fruits and Vegetables** provide fibre that supports gut bacteria, and helps our bowels work, as well as vitamins and minerals that support many essential processes in the body including the immune system. Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables all count. Aim for at least 5 portions of vegetables and fruit a day, an adult portion is 80g. For more tips on what counts as a portion see this video www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
- **Dairy foods** provide important minerals, such as calcium, for healthy bones and teeth. People with COPD can have weaker bones. This can be a result of your medication or because you are less active. To keep bones strong, try and include a portion of calcium rich foods such as dairy, 3 times a day - examples include cheese, milk, yogurt, fromage frais. Some individuals avoid dairy as they feel it makes them produce more mucous, a small study showed that milk alters the thickness of the saliva rather than it being mucous. If you wish to avoid dairy, plant-based dairy foods such as almond milk, oat milk are suitable alternatives, with added calcium and vitamins are suitable alternatives. Other sources of calcium include leafy green vegetables, beans (e.g. kidney beans), chickpeas (e.g. hummus), nuts (e.g. almonds), seeds (e.g. sesame), fruit (e.g. oranges, dried figs) and seafood (e.g. canned salmon, sardines), drinking water from hard water sources
- **Fluid** is essential to keep us hydrated. Check your urine colour - dark urine can be a sign of dehydration. Aim to drink enough fluid to keep urine a pale straw colour. All fluid counts (except alcohol). When appetite is poor nourishing fluids such as milky drinks, juices or smoothies can help provide fluid and nutrition
- If you are unwell, losing weight or strength, or you are struggling to eat enough because of a poor appetite or because symptoms are interfering with the enjoyment of eating, the following tips may help:

Tips for Eating when you are Short of Breath

If you find you are eating less because you are short of breath try to:

- Eat something 6 times per day, try to eat 3 smaller meals and have snacks in between meals or nutritious drinks e.g. milky drink or fruit smoothie
- Choose softer, moist foods that require less effort to eat and are easier to chew and swallow
- Take your time during eating

Tips for Coping with a Dry Mouth



Dry mouth can be caused by using oxygen, nebulisers or inhalers. It can make it difficult to chew and swallow foods, and sometimes it can lead to taste changes.

- Choose softer or moist foods, e.g. minced beef in shepherd's pie rather than pieces of meat
 - Suck sugar-free fruit sweets, ice lollies made with fruit juice or squash, or chew sugar-free gum
 - Pastilles or saliva sprays are available from your pharmacist or on prescription if the problem continues
 - If you are finding it difficult to swallow, are frequently coughing during meals or your voice becomes gargly ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a speech and language therapist who will be able to advise you
- Always make sure you keep your mouth clean and moist to avoid infections. Ask your dentist for advice if needed

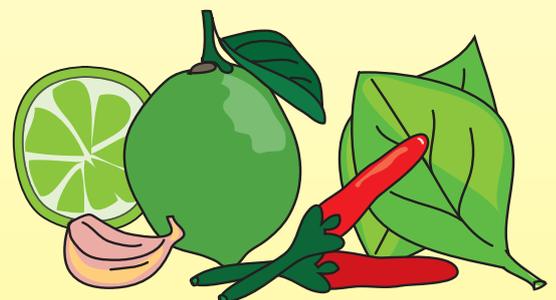
The Importance of Vitamin D

- Vitamin D helps to keep your bones strong, helps muscle movement and strength, is needed for gut health and immune function
- About half of our Vitamin D comes from diet and the remainder from the action of sunlight on the skin. Foods rich in Vitamin D include oily fish, red meat, liver, egg yolks and foods that have been fortified with Vitamin D such as some fat spreads, milks including plant based milks and breakfast cereals
- In the UK a Vitamin D supplement is recommended to provide an additional 10 micrograms (10 mcg or 400 i.u.) a day particularly for those who spend a lot of time indoors and during the Autumn and Winter months when the level of sunlight is low. Vitamin D supplements are available at low cost in chemists, supermarkets and online. Look for the Vitamin D₃ version as this is better absorbed by the body

Tips for Coping with Taste Changes

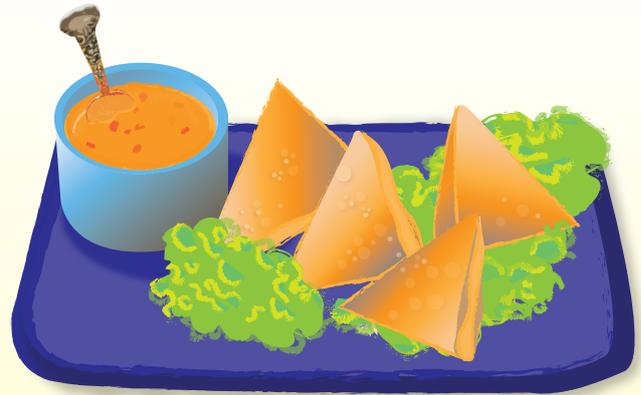
If your taste changes you may lose your appetite and may not feel like eating your usual foods:

- After using a steroid inhaler rinse your mouth and gargle with water to prevent oral thrush
- Look after your mouth: regularly clean your teeth/dentures, use water and floss
- Experiment with herbs, spices, pepper, chutneys and pickles in cooking
- If you struggle with the strong taste of hot foods try cold foods
- Focus on the foods you enjoy but don't be afraid to try new foods
- If you go off a particular food, try it again regularly as your tastes may continue to change



Tips for Making the Most of Your Food and Drinks to Avoid Further Weight Loss

Replace low calorie/diet foods with full fat foods (e.g. whole milk). Include sweet treats between meals such as a piece of cake, a biscuit, chocolate. (If you have diabetes ask to see a Dietitian to discuss how to balance the need for extra calories with your blood glucose). Whilst foods higher in fats and containing sugar are usually recommended in moderation they can help you gain weight or avoid losing more weight. Try some of the ideas below:



- Add cream, grated cheese or cream cheese or ground nuts such as ground almonds to food e.g. soups, sauces, curries, scrambled eggs
- Use olive oil, mayonnaise, salad cream or salad dressing in sandwiches and on salads
- Add extra butter, margarine or ghee to vegetables, potatoes, scrambled eggs and bread
- Fortify your usual milk: mix 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder with some milk to make a paste and then whisk into a pint of milk to then use on cereals, in drinks and in sauces
- Add honey, syrup and jams to porridge, milky puddings, on bread, toast or tea cakes
- Take nourishing drinks e.g. smoothies, soups, fruit juice, milkshakes or hot chocolate
- Use convenience foods from the cupboard or freezer e.g. biscuits, baked beans, soup, tinned puddings, custard
- Powdered supplements (ask your pharmacist for more information) are available from most supermarkets and pharmacies and can be used in between meals
- Don't fill up on drinks before or during your meal
- Eat more of the foods that you enjoy at the times of day when you feel more like eating
- Always try to accompany a meal with vegetables, salad, or fruit. If your appetite is poor, don't fill up on vegetables and fruit as they are low in Calories. Instead, eat the protein and energy foods first, accompanied with a small portion of vegetables, topping with extra calories by adding oil, butter, cream and take a glass of fruit juice or smoothie alongside a meal to provide vitamins and minerals you would usually get from eating larger portions of fruit and vegetables

If you feel too tired to shop, prepare or cook meals

- Ask family, friends or a carer for help with cooking, shopping or ordering food for home delivery
- Ask to be assessed for a package of care (contact your local social services department)
- Use preprepared meals, meals on wheels services or home delivery services
- Arrange to eat regularly with a friend or family member or attend a local lunch club
- Prepare meals when you feel less tired e.g. consider using a slow cooker or prepare a casserole in the morning when energy levels may be higher, that you can warm through to eat later in the day and make a large portion so you can freeze batches to use later

Vitamins and Minerals

- Vitamins and minerals are important to support your immune system. If you are struggling to eat enough, your diet is limited in variety or you are struggling to manage 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, you may not be getting enough vitamins and minerals. Consider a one a day multivitamin and mineral supplement

For more information about living with COPD visit www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/conditions/copd-chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease or call the Asthma + Lung UK helpline on **0300 222 5800**