

Managing nutritional concerns: Lack of appetite

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Appetite loss is a common symptom experienced by patients undergoing cancer treatment. You may feel as though you have lost your desire to eat, or you may not feel like eating very much. Appetite loss can have more than one cause, including nausea and vomiting, changes in how things taste, fatigue, pain, and stress. You may experience appetite loss for only a few days after treatment or throughout your treatment regimen. Not eating enough can quickly lead to weight loss, dehydration, and weakness and fatigue. Maintaining proper nutrition will help you to maintain

your strength and energy, improve how well you recover from side effects, maintain your weight, and recover more quickly after your treatment.¹

Tips For People Experiencing Appetite Loss^{2,3}:

- Speak with a dietitian certified in oncology nutrition (CSO) to discuss ways to add more calories and protein to your diet
- Eat small frequent meals (5-6 times a day) instead of 3 large meals. Aim to eat something at least every 2-3 hours
- Add extra calories to your diet by adding extra butter, oil, mayonnaise, sauces, dressing, gravy, honey, jam, cheese, and nuts to your meals
- Add extra protein by including poultry, meat, fish, eggs, yogurt, cheese, beans, and nuts to your meals and snacks. Dried milk powder mixed in gravies, soups and sauces can also add extra protein
- Keep nutritious snacks nearby or with you as you travel. High protein snacks such as peanut butter crackers, granola bars, nuts, yogurt, pudding, and cheese can be helpful. Having quick nutritious snacks on hand can make it easier for you to eat
- Drink high calorie liquids such as juice, milkshakes, smoothies, and protein drinks
- Try nutritional supplements or liquid meal replacements if recommended by your physician and healthcare team
- Drink fluids half an hour before or after meals as some people find consuming beverages with meals can make them feel fuller
- Exercise can help stimulate your appetite, check with your doctor if you should increase your activity level
- Try to make mealtime enjoyable. Invite friends or family over or play relaxing music
- Speak to your physician if you are experiencing continued weight loss

References:

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