

Nutritional guidance for those with a smaller appetite



Every mouthful counts.

Your appetite may vary during your illness; some of these ideas may help you.

If you have a small appetite

When you're ill, you can sometimes experience changes to your appetite and the way food tastes, or a dry or sore mouth. This leaflet will give you some hints and tips on how to make food more enjoyable and how to make sure you're getting as much nourishment as possible from the food you do eat. If you have problems swallowing, please seek advice from your doctor or dietitian.

If you've lost your appetite:

- Make the most of when your appetite is better. Eat when you feel like eating, it doesn't have to be a regular meal time
- Try having smaller meals or snacks throughout the day rather than three larger meals
- You might find you feel hungrier if you're relaxed. Try and get plenty of fresh air and go for gentle walks. Small amounts of alcohol can also help you boost your appetite



If you're only eating a little, every mouthful counts, so try to make your food as nourishing as you can. Here are some practical ways of enriching your food:

- Go for full fat options when buying milk, mayonnaise, cream and yoghurts
- Add butter or margarine to potatoes, vegetables and pasta
- Add sugar, honey or syrup to drinks
- Spread butter or margarine thickly
- Add jam, marmalade, honey, syrup, chocolate spread or peanut butter to toast, crumpets or porridge
- Add grated cheese, cream cheese, cream and creme fraiche to soups,
- mashed potato, casseroles and sauces
- Make up packet soups and jellies with milk
- Make fortified milk by adding 2 - 4 tablespoons of milk powder to a pint of whole milk



Ideas for quick snacks:

- Crackers and cheese
- Nuts/crisps
- Soup
- Sausage rolls
- Cereal/porridge
- Tinned fruit with cream/ice cream/yoghurt/tinned evaporated milk
- Ice cream, mousse, yoghurt, trifle, creme caramel, milk puddings, custard
- Malt loaf, crumpets, toast, scones
- Chocolate bars, sweets, cakes, biscuits, cereal bars, fruit pies
- Sandwiches with various fillings
- Toast with various toppings (cheese, beans, spaghetti, banana, eggs etc)
- Eggs, scrambled or an omelette

It's a good idea to keep some easy to prepare foods in your cupboards and freezer so you can make something to eat whenever you do feel hungry. Try these:

Freezer food:

Ready meals, fruit/vegetables, fish fingers/fish portions, oven chips, pies/ pizza, ice cream

Cupboard food:

Tinned meat / fish, tinned stew / meatballs / curry, tinned vegetables, milk - long life, powdered or evaporated, instant mashed potato, long lasting bread such as tortilla wraps, cereal, pasta, baked beans / spaghetti hoops



Ideas for nourishing drinks:

- Hot milky drinks like hot chocolate, cocoa,
- Horlicks or Ovaltine
- Milkshakes (made with syrups or ice cream)
- Fruit smoothies
- Instant soups made with milk
- Special powdered drinks such as Complan and Build Up. Some nutritional drinks are available on prescription, discuss this with your doctor or dietitian
- Try making drinks with fortified milk

If food tastes different:

- If food has no taste, try foods you don't normally eat. You may find adding salt, pepper, herbs or spices is now enjoyable
- If meat tastes bitter, try using cheese, eggs and fish instead
- If savoury food tastes too sweet, try adding lemon or vinegar, pickles, Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce
- If food tastes salty or bitter, add sweet foods, for example, sweet and sour sauces or pineapple with gammon
- Cold foods may taste better as they have less smell
- Sipping fluids through a straw can bypass the tastebuds
- Keeping your mouth clean and fresh will help to prevent food tasting unpleasant
- Try using plastic cutlery if food tastes metallic
- Experiment with curries, chillis and Italian foods which have distinctive flavours



If your mouth is sore:

- Stick to soft, moist or liquidised food, which can be easier to chew and swallow
- Try eating food which is warm rather than hot
- Try chilled food and drinks, which can sooth your mouth
- Add sauces or gravy to help keep food moist
- Smooth food without lumps, such as custard, mousse, creme caramel and trifle may be easier to eat. Try to avoid coarse or dry foods like crisps, toast, muesli and dry biscuits
- Try nourishing drinks such as milk, milkshakes or nutritional supplements (as advised by your dietician). Try to drink as much water as you can manage; you may find it easier to drink through a straw
- Avoid foods that can irritate your mouth. These may include salty or spicy foods like pickle, chilli or curries; acidic food and fruit juices; vinegar and alcohol (especially spirits)
- Use a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste twice a day to keep your mouth clean and fresh, and apply lip balm to help cracked or sore lips feel more comfortable
- Limit smoking and alcohol which can cause irritation to your mouth
- Seek dental advice if your dentures are loose or poorly fitting



If your mouth is dry:

- Sip fluids frequently, and carry a bottle of water with you
- Use a water spray to freshen your mouth
- Fizzy drinks and tangy fruits (lemon, orange, grapefruit and pineapple chunks) are refreshing if you have a dry mouth (but may irritate a sore mouth)
- Try sucking ice cubes and ice lollies
- Sugar-free boiled sweets or sugar-free chewing gum can help to stimulate saliva production. If you need more help, talk to your doctor or nurse about artificial saliva sprays, pastilles or oral gels
- Eat soft, moist foods with extra sauces



Feeling sick?

Often, nausea and vomiting can be a side effect of your medication or treatment. You may not feel like eating but it's important to try to eat and drink regularly, even if it's only small amounts.

Here are some tips which may help you manage your sickness or nausea:

- Try to have small, frequent meals or snacks. Sometimes eating actually helps to reduce the feeling of sickness.
- You may find cold food easier to tolerate than hot food.
- Try to stay away from the kitchen, as the sight and smell of food may make it worse. Let someone else do the cooking or but ready prepared meals.
- Sitting upright while eating and for an hour or so after your meal may help
- Eat somewhere where there is plenty of fresh air - maybe even outside
- Some foods (like plain biscuits, crackers or ginger biscuits) may help reduce nausea, especially first thing in the morning
- It is important to drink regularly, but tea, coffee and milky drinks may make you feel worse. Try squashes, fruit juices and water. Fizzy drinks like ginger ale and soda water can help reduce the sick feeling, especially if chilled.
- If you have been prescribed anti-sickness medication (anti-emetics), try to remember to take it regularly, as prescribed. If your anti-sickness medication is ineffective, discuss this with your doctor, who may be able to prescribe an alternative.
- If you have been prescribed anti-sickness medication, try to remember to take it regularly. If your medication isn't helping, please discuss this with your doctor who may be able to prescribe an alternative.

24-hour advice line

Patients, carers and healthcare professionals can get advice around the clock on: 0800 970 7970 (Stockport area) and 0808 144 2860 (Manchester, Salford and Trafford areas). The advice line is for medical help and advice only. Please direct general enquiries to the main hospice numbers above.

Moya Cole Hospice, Heald Green:

St Ann's Road North, Heald Green,
Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 3SZ

Telephone: 0161 437 8136

Moya Cole Hospice, Little Hulton:

Meadowsweet Lane, Off Peel Lane, Little
Hulton, Worsley, M28 0FE

Telephone: 0161 702 8181

Key telephone numbers

Being You Centre, Heald Green -
0161 498 3612

Being You Centre, Little Hulton -
0161 702 5416

Get more information

We have a wide range of information leaflets, available both in print and to download from our website. To get your copies, either go to our website or call one of the main hospice telephone numbers.

Comments and feedback

We welcome your feedback: go online at www.moyacole.org.uk/feedback, talk to a member of staff or fill in a comments card (found near the red posting boxes around our sites).

Formal complaints can be made in writing to our Chief Executive at our Heald Green address.

Find out more about us

You can find out more about Moya Cole Hospice on our website, or by e-mailing us:

**www.moyacole.org.uk
e-mail enquiries@moyacole.org.uk**