

Nutrition and COPD

Our bodies require a variety of nutrients for proper function (including breathing!). Eating a balanced diet is essential to maintain health and manage your COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease).

Following Canada's Food Guide for healthy eating helps to make sure you are getting the nutrients your body needs. Choose a variety of foods from the 4 food groups every day.

If you feel breathless while eating

- ✓ Eat slowly and take small bites.
- ✓ Chew your food well and continue to breathe while chewing.
- ✓ Have small, frequent meals. (Larger meals may be tiring to eat and may cause stomach distension, making breathing even more difficult.)
- ✓ Eat soft and easy to chew foods that require less energy.
- ✓ Take a rest before and after eating.
- ✓ Limit fluid consumption during meals, drink between meals instead.



If you are too tired to eat

- ✓ Eat your largest meal when you are least tired (usually in the morning).
- ✓ Prepare your meals for the day when you have the most energy.
- ✓ Eat foods that are easy to prepare. Examples: microwave meals, eggs, soups, sandwiches, toast, smoothies, cereal, yogurt, canned fruit, cottage cheese, nutritional supplements
- ✓ Ask your family or friends to bring you food.
- ✓ Sign up for a meal or grocery delivery service in your area.
- ✓ Freeze meals or leftovers ahead of time.
- ✓ Have a rest before eating to increase your energy.
- ✓ Try nutritional supplements such as Boost or Ensure.

If you feel bloated or full

- ✓ Avoid gassy foods as they can cause increased bloating, such as: beans, legumes, broccoli, cheese, cauliflower and cabbage.

If you have a poor appetite or feel full quickly

- ✓ Choose high protein/high calorie foods to get the maximum nutrition, with minimal volume.
- ✓ Eat small frequent meals.
- ✓ Avoid low calorie foods and drinks.
- ✓ Drink after eating to avoid feeling full.
- ✓ For extra protein, choose peanut butter, eggs, cheese, milk, yogurt, chicken, fish and meats.
- ✓ For added calories, use butter, sour cream, high fat milk, honey, jam, cheese, cream cheese, salad dressings, oil and mayonnaise.

If you are retaining fluids

- ✓ Do not add salt in cooking or at the table.
- ✓ Choose foods low in salt (sodium). Foods high in sodium include canned soups, convenience foods, salted chips and crackers, pickles, processed or smoked meats, and salted nuts.

To regulate bowel movements

Constipation can also cause breathlessness.

- ✓ Choose high fibre foods (whole grain breads, cereals and pasta, fruits, and vegetables).
- ✓ Add bran to your meals or baking.
- ✓ Exercise regularly.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids.

To control mucous

- ✓ Drink 6 to 8 cups of fluid each day to keep yourself hydrated. This also helps keep mucous thin and moist, making it easier to cough up.
- ✓ Contrary to popular belief, milk does not increase mucous. Fat in milk coats the mouth, and can lead to this sensation. If this is a problem for you, try low-fat milk products

Weight and COPD

It is important to maintain a healthy body weight when you have COPD.

Being overweight can make breathing more difficult and put more pressure on your lungs. More weight also means more body cells needing oxygen, making your lungs work harder.

If you are overweight:

- ✓ Limit your total daily calories and cut out 'extra' foods.
- ✓ Exercise regularly as much as you can.

Being underweight can make you feel tired and weak. With COPD, you need to use more energy to breathe.

If you are underweight:

- ✓ Eat small frequent meals.
- ✓ Eat a high protein, high calorie diet.
- ✓ Try nutritional supplements such as Boost or Ensure.