

# Eating Well for Your Lungs

**You have been given this leaflet to help you eat well and keep as healthy as possible.**

- Your diet and nutritional intake are very important when you have COPD
- COPD can have an effect on your whole body. It is therefore important to eat a balanced and varied diet to help maintain your strength and fitness, as well as help your body fight infections
- When you are feeling well and strong, healthy eating can keep you feeling this way
- It is important to think about your weight. If you are very overweight your heart and lungs have to work harder to supply oxygen to your body. Likewise if you are too thin, you are more at risk from infections
- Ask your nurse what your Body Mass Index (BMI) is. If it is between 20 and 30, it is a healthy weight for someone with COPD
- If you start struggling to eat enough, find that you are losing weight and/or are finding it difficult to do everyday activities such as shopping and socialising, speak to your doctor or nurse

## Protein Foods

### For healthy strong muscles (including those that help with breathing)

- Try to eat protein foods at least twice a day, e.g. lunch, dinner and snacks
- Foods that provide us with protein include: meat, fish, eggs, dairy products (cheese, yogurt, milk), tofu, beans, lentils and nuts

## Carbohydrate Foods

### For energy

- Starchy foods include: potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, cereals - always include a starchy food at each meal
- Sugary foods include: cakes, biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks - try to take in the diet occasionally as a treat

## Fruit and Vegetables

### For essential vitamins and minerals to boost your immune system

- We should include plenty of fruit and vegetables in our diets - aim for 5 portions a day
- Your fruit and vegetables can be fresh, frozen, canned - they all count

## Dairy Foods

### For strong bones

- People with COPD can have weaker bones. This can be a result of your medication or because you are less active
- Dairy foods include: cheese, milk, yogurt, fromage frais - include a portion of dairy food in your diet 3 times per day
- Non-dairy foods providing the same important nutrients (e.g. 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)

## High Energy Foods

- High energy foods are the ones to think about avoiding if you are trying to reduce your weight
- They tend to contain a lot of calories but don't provide many of the important nutrients for your body - try to cut back on these foods
- High energy foods are those that are high in fat (e.g. chips, fried foods, meat pies), high in sugar (e.g. fizzy drinks, sweets), or high in both sugar and fat (e.g. chocolate, cream cakes)

## Diet and Breathing

- If you become breathless when eating you may find it easier to eat 3 smaller meals and have snacks in between meals, however it is important not to reduce your overall food intake

## 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 fruit sweets, ice cubes made with fruit juice or squash, or chew sugar-free gum
- Your doctor or nurse may prescribe some pastilles or saliva sprays if the problem continues
- If you are finding it difficult to swallow, are frequently coughing during meals or your voice becomes gargly mention it to your doctor or nurse, they will be able to give you advice

## 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 mouthwash and floss
- Focus on the foods you enjoy but don't be afraid to try new foods
- Try sharp or spicy foods, as they have a stronger taste
- Experiment with different seasonings and sauces
- If you go off a particular food, try it again regularly as your tastes may continue to change

## Eating and Smoking

- Giving up smoking is a fantastic step to increasing your health and fitness but you may find your weight increases slightly. Don't be too concerned about this however - the most important thing is to continue on your 'stop smoking journey'. Stopping smoking will in time also improve your taste and sense of smell making food more pleasurable

## Eating and Physical Activity

- If you are living with COPD it is very important to keep as active as possible, this helps your lungs and also the rest of your body to stay strong
- Try to gently increase the amount of activity you are doing, and ask about local activity programmes. Activity does not have to be strenuous – try gentle exercises such as walking or cycling
- Ask your doctor or nurse for advice