

# Improving Your Nutrition in COPD

**You have been given this leaflet because, although you are quite well, you have lost some weight or muscle strength.**

- Your diet and nutritional intake are very important when you have COPD
- COPD can have an effect on your whole body. It is important to eat a balanced and varied diet to help maintain your strength and fitness, as well as help your body fight infections
- If you are struggling to eat enough, you are losing weight, or you are losing strength in your muscles, then you need to think differently about the foods you are eating. Following the advice in this leaflet may help you regain some of the strength and weight you have lost

## Monitor Your Weight Monthly

- Keep an eye on your weight each month as it is an indicator of what is happening in your body
- If you are unable to weigh yourself, be aware of visual signs of your weight decreasing, for example jewellery and clothes becoming looser. Sometimes you won't be able to gain back all of the weight you have lost, but the tips below can help you avoid losing more weight
- If you continue to lose weight over the next 3 months seek advice from your doctor or nurse or Dietitian
- Even if you are overweight, it is still important that your weight is monitored by a doctor or nurse and it is important to mention if you have lost weight without meaning to
- The free leaflet 'Your Guide to Making the Most of Your Food' contains more tips and ideas to help you get the most nutrition from your food ([www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers))

## Protein Foods

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

- Try to eat protein foods 3 or 4 times a day, e.g. lunch, dinner and snacks
- Foods that provide protein include: meat, fish, eggs, dairy products (cheese, yogurt, milk), tofu, beans, lentils

## Carbohydrate Foods

### For energy – always include a starchy food at each meal

- Starchy foods include: potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, cereals
- Sugary foods include: puddings, cakes, biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks

## 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, in pies, crumbles or trifles - they all count

## Dairy Foods

### For strong bones

- People with COPD can have weaker bones. This can be a result of medication or because you are less active
- Dairy foods include: cheese, milk, yogurt, cream, fromage frais - include a portion of dairy in your diet 3 times per day - don't choose low fat options
- 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. salmon, sardines)

## Tips for Eating When You Are Short of Breath

### If you find you are eating less because you are short of breath

- Aim 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

## 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
- Try sharp, spicy or sugary 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

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

- Choose full fat foods (e.g. whole milk) or high energy foods - those high in fat (e.g. chips, fried foods), sugar (e.g. fizzy drinks, sweets) or fat and sugar (e.g. chocolate, cream cakes). Avoid low fat or 'diet' varieties
- Whilst these foods are usually recommended in moderation they can help you gain weight, or avoid losing more weight. Include them in your diet as often as possible as part of meals or snacks
- Add cream, grated cheese or cream cheese to food e.g. soups, sauces, curries, scrambled eggs
- Use mayonnaise, salad cream or dressing in sandwiches and on salads
- Add extra butter, margarine or ghee to vegetables, potatoes, scrambled eggs and bread
- Fortify your usual milk: whisk 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder into one pint of milk
- 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, such as Complan and Meritene Energis, 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
- The free leaflet 'Your Guide to Making the Most of your Food' contains lots of additional tips and ideas ([www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers))

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

- Ask family, friends or your 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 meals on wheels services or home delivery services offering pre-prepared meals
- Arrange to eat regularly with a friend or family member or attend a local lunch club

## Eating and Physical Activity in COPD

### It is important to keep as active as possible to help your lungs and the rest of your body to stay strong.

#### Ask your doctor or nurse for advice

- Activity does not have to be strenuous – try gentle exercises such as walking or cycling
- Try to gently increase the amount of activity you are doing yourself - ask about local activity programmes
- Make sure you have a high energy snack after you have exercised to avoid losing further weight