

Eating Well for Your Lungs

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

Key principles for caring for yourself with COPD

- **Eat healthily and keep a healthy body weight** – eating a balanced and varied diet can help prevent and fight infections, keep your body and lungs strong and make it easier to keep active. This leaflet provides further information on foods to include in your diet. 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 one of your healthcare team e.g. doctor, nurse, community pharmacist who can refer you to a dietitian for further advice if needed
- **Keep active** - keeping as active as possible, helps to keep your lungs and the rest of your body strong. If you haven't been very active, try to gently increase the amount of activity you are doing. It doesn't have to be strenuous – try to take up activities you enjoy, walk wherever you can, climb the stairs rather than take the lift. Ask your local doctor's surgery about local activity programmes that might help get you started and keep you motivated
- **Control your breathing** – speak to your respiratory physiotherapist or nurse about breathing techniques and positions that might help you – further information can be found at www.acprc.org.uk/Data/Publication_Downloads/GL-05ACBT.pdf
- **Take care of yourself** – make sure you are getting enough rest and sleep and that you consider your mental wellbeing. Anxiety and depression can arise when dealing with a long-term condition. If you have any concerns about coping with your condition and symptoms talk to your health care professional who may be able to recommend tools, counselling and medications that may help
- **If you smoke try to give up** - this a fantastic step to increasing your health and fitness. Ask your GP, nurse or community pharmacy for advice on smoking cessation services available and for any pointers on the professional support and effective medication that may be available to help you succeed. If you give up and find your weight increases slightly don't be too concerned - the most important thing is to continue on your 'stop smoking journey' which in time will improve your taste and sense of smell making food more pleasurable
- **Monitor your health** - a self-management plan, that you have agreed with your healthcare professional can help you manage your COPD and help with your condition, symptoms, medication and flare ups



Diet and Nutrition

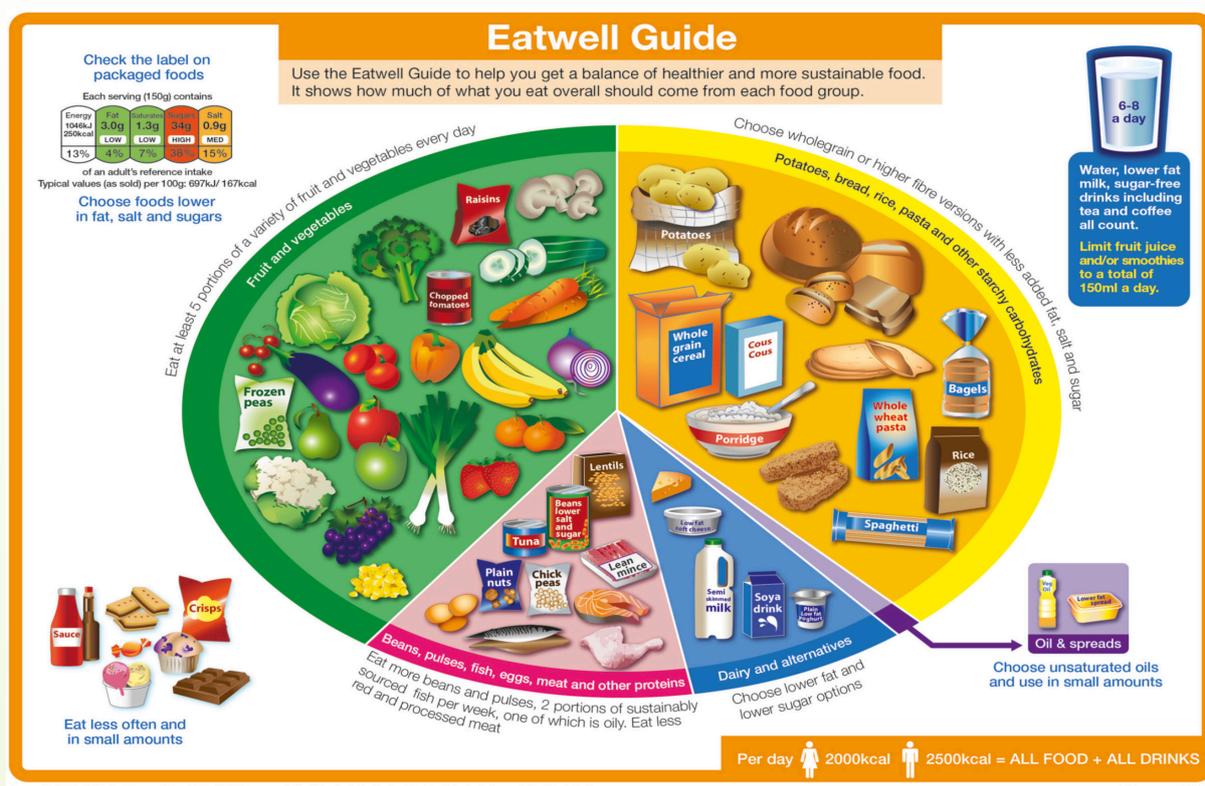
- If you are living with a lung condition such as COPD, eating well is especially important. When you are feeling well and strong, healthy eating can keep you feeling this way
- Being a healthy weight can help with breathing. If you are very overweight your heart and lungs have to work harder to supply oxygen to your body. If you are too thin, you are more at risk of infections and may feel more breathless



- Body Mass Index (BMI) is a way of checking if your weight is in a healthy range. You may wish to weigh yourself regularly e.g. once a week or once a month or otherwise keep an eye on how your clothes fit you. A healthy BMI when living with COPD is between 20 and 30. A healthcare professional can help calculate and check your BMI or if you know your weight and height you can check it out here: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator or use the self-screening tool at www.malnutritionselfscreening.org



Tips for a Healthy Balanced Diet



A balanced diet includes:

- Protein Foods** - protein is essential for keeping muscles strong (including those we use for breathing), fuelling our immune system and fighting off or recovering from infections. Protein rich foods include meat, chicken, poultry, eggs, dairy foods such as milk and yogurt, beans, pulses, nuts and tofu. Try to eat a protein rich food three times a day, for example as part of each meal. More information on adding protein to your diet can be found at www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/proteinideas.pdf
- Carbohydrate Foods** provide energy and fibre. Fibre supports our gut bacteria which play a part in supporting good gut health and keeping our bowels working - where possible choose high fibre versions such as wholemeal or seeded bread, potatoes in skins, high fibre cereals, brown rice
- Fruits and Vegetables** provide fibre that supports gut bacteria and helps our bowels work, as well as vitamins and minerals that support many essential processes in the body including the immune system. Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables all count. Aim for at least 5 portions of vegetables and fruit a day, an adult portion is 80g. For more information on what counts as a portion see this video www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/
- Dairy foods** provide protein, Vitamin D and important minerals such as calcium. Calcium and Vitamin D are required in combination with weight bearing exercise to help keep bones strong. People with COPD can have weaker bones due the side effects of medication such as steroids and because breathlessness may limit activity. Cheese, milk, yogurt, fromage frais are rich sources of calcium. Non-dairy sources of calcium include plant-based milks with added vitamins and calcium, 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** 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). These are the foods to limit if you are trying to reduce your weight or avoid gaining weight
- Fluid** is essential to keep hydrated and keep mucus thin and easier to clear. The average amount of fluid required to keep hydrated is between 6 – 8 cups per day. All fluid counts – water, tea, coffee, milk, squash and fruit juice, with the exception of alcohol. The amount needed can vary depending on how warm your environment is and how active you are. Checking the colour of your urine can indicate if you are hydrated or dehydrated. As a guide you should drink enough fluid to keep urine a pale straw colour. Dark urine can be a sign of dehydration – seek advice from your healthcare professional if this is regularly the case

Tips for getting enough vitamins and minerals

- If your diet lacks variety, you have a poor appetite or you are struggling to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, you may not be getting enough vitamins and minerals. Consider a one-a-day complete multivitamin and mineral supplement. These are available in supermarkets, chemists and online

The Importance of Vitamin D

- Vitamin D helps to keep your bones strong, helps muscle movement and strength, is needed for gut health and immune function
- About half of our Vitamin D comes from diet and the remainder from the action of sunlight on the skin. Foods rich in Vitamin D include oily fish, red meat, liver, egg yolks and foods that have been fortified with Vitamin D such as some fat spreads, milks including plant based milks and breakfast cereals
- In the UK a Vitamin D supplement to provide an additional 10 micrograms (10 mcg or 400 i.u.) a day is recommended, particularly for those who spend a lot of time indoors and during the Autumn and Winter months when the level of sunlight is low. Vitamin D supplements are available at low cost in chemists, supermarkets and online. Look for the Vitamin D₃ version as this is better absorbed by the body



Tips for Eating when you are Short of Breath

If you become breathless when eating you may find it easier to:

- Eat 3 smaller meals and have snacks or nourishing milky drinks in between meals
- Choose softer, moist foods that are easier to chew and swallow
- Take your time during eating

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.



- Try to drink six to eight cups of fluid each day (including nourishing fluids such as milky drinks and juices), keep a water bottle handy to take sips of water to keep your mouth moist
- Choose soft, moist foods, e.g. minced beef in shepherd's pie rather than pieces of meat, add sauces such as gravy, mayonnaise, salad cream or cheese sauce to foods
- Suck sugar-free fruit sweets, ice lollies made with fruit juice or squash, or chew sugar-free gum

- Pastilles or saliva sprays are available from your pharmacist or on prescription if the problem continues
- If you are finding it difficult to swallow, are frequently coughing during meals or your voice becomes gargly ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a speech and language therapist who will be able to advise you
- Always make sure you keep your mouth clean and moist to avoid infections. Ask your dentist for advice if needed

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 water and floss
- Experiment with herbs, spices, pepper, chutneys and pickles in cooking
- If you struggle with the strong taste of hot foods try cold foods
- Focus on the foods you enjoy but don't be afraid to try new foods
- If you go off a particular food, try it again regularly as your tastes may continue to change



If you have diabetes remember being unwell can affect your blood sugar control. Speak to your healthcare professional to get further advice if needed.

For more information about living with COPD visit www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/conditions/copd-chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease or call the Asthma + Lung UK helpline on **0300 222 5800**

