

Addressing Poor Appetite

When you feel unwell you may not feel like eating, but this is when your body needs nutrition the most. Even if you have no appetite, your body still needs nutrition to help maintain your weight and support your health.

What happens when we don't eat enough?

Ongoing poor appetite or appetite loss may lead to weight loss, tiredness and weakness from muscle loss. It can also slow down your recovery from illness or injury.

How do I get nutrition when I don't feel like eating?

- **Eat smaller meals** – try having six smaller meals and snacks across the day so that meals are not so overwhelming
- **Listen to your body** – eat more when you feel better to make up for the times when you don't
- **Any food, any time** – eat your favourite foods at any time of day and not just at set times
- **Eat with others** – eat meals with family and friends when you can to make mealtimes more enjoyable
- **Use a small plate** – serving your food on a smaller plate can make meals feel less overwhelming
- **Food first, fluids last** – eat before you drink to make your calories count
- **Be prepared** – have ready-prepared meals and snacks at hand for when you don't feel like cooking
- **Get moving** – gentle exercise can help stimulate your appetite.

Many Meals Make Light Work

Eating smaller meals makes eating less overwhelming. Choose foods that are nutritious to help give your body what it needs.



Cheese and crackers



2 hard-boiled eggs



Bowl of cereal with full-cream milk



Peanut butter sandwich



A tub of protein or Greek yoghurt



Veggies with hummus



A cold milkshake or smoothie



Toasted cheese



A handful or two of trail mix with fruit, nuts and seeds

What if I feel sick?

Ongoing nausea can lead to poor appetite and stop you from eating well. Eating cold or dry foods can help because they don't have a strong odour.

Avoid greasy or fatty foods, instead snack on dry cereals, crackers and toast. If the smell of food makes you feel sick, stay away from the kitchen.

If you are cooking for others, try plain pastas and foods that have no odour. Salty foods can also help to reduce nausea – chicken broth or crackers are good choices.

If you have concerns about your appetite or eating, see your doctor or an accredited practising dietitian for more information and advice.

Health professional notes

These resources are not meant to replace dietary advice provided by your doctor or dietitian. Please consult with your doctor or dietitian before making changes to your diet or physical activity routine.

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