

How to Manage Your Loss of Appetite

Loss of appetite is when you do not have feelings of hunger or interest in food. You may lose weight and not be strong enough for your cancer treatments if you are not able to eat. This handout offers information on how to manage your loss of appetite.

What you can do to manage your loss of appetite

1. Make every bite count

- Choose foods high in calories and protein. See examples of meal ideas high in calories and protein on pages 2 and 3 of this handout.
- Drink fluids high in calories (examples: homemade smoothies, milkshakes, Ensure® Plus, Boost® Plus) if you do not feel like eating food.
- Eat less foods low in calories. This includes salads and fluids. Water, coffee and tea can make you feel full and not want to eat. Do not choose foods with reduced fats (examples: light or low fat).
- **Timing of your meals** Set an alarm to remind you to eat a small amount of food every 2-hours even if you are not hungry.
- Eat the largest meal of the day when you feel hungry (even if this is at breakfast time).
- Take snacks with you whenever you leave home.

2. What should I eat?

- Eat foods that are cold or at room temperature if you do not feel like eating a hot meal.
- Some snack foods can be a healthy option.
- Include a protein rich food or liquid at every meal and snack. This includes milk, buttermilk, yogurt drinks, kefir and nutritional supplements (examples: Ensure® Plus or Boost® Plus, Premier Protein®, or Fairlife).

3. Make your mealtime enjoyable

- Use smaller plates or bowls for your meals.
- Use herbs and seasonings to enhance the flavour of your food.
- Choose a quiet and relaxing location to eat your meals.
- Eat with other people such as your family members and friends.
- Ask a family member or friend to help prepare meals or snacks for you.
- Buy prepared foods or consider a meal service if it is difficult (hard) for you to prepare meals.
- Make extra meals and freeze them to use at another time.
- Take a walk outdoors to get some fresh air and exercise before meal times. This may help you feel hungry.

Meal ideas with foods high in calories and proteins

Breakfast

- Homemade smoothies using Ensure® Plus or Boost® Plus as the base ingredient or adding a protein powder
- French toast, pancakes or waffles with butter and syrup
- Toaster strudels
- Cereal with whole milk and fruit
- Hot cereal made with whole milk, butter, fruit and brown sugar
- Muffins, scones, toast, tea biscuits, bagels, crumpets, croissants with butter, peanut butter, jam or cheese
- Yogurt mixed with sliced fruit, granola and nuts
- Eggs – scrambled, poached, boiled on toast with cheese and butter

Lunch and dinner

- Sandwiches with your favorite fillings with extra butter and mayonnaise
- Pasta with cream sauce and grated cheese
- Potato, pasta, bean or grain salad
- Pizza
- Baked potato with all the trimmings (cheese, sour cream, butter and bacon bits)
- Cream soups or broth soups with meat or beans
- Tortilla with sour cream, meat, refried beans and cheese
- Toast with baked beans
- Perogies with sour cream, cheese, bacon bits and fried onion
- Prepared casseroles with meat, fish or chicken
- Prepared quiche
- Frozen entrées such as lasagna or shepherd's pie
- Omelets with cheese, meat and vegetables
- Sausage rolls
- Tuna melts

Snacks

- Cereal bar with cheese slices
- Cottage cheese and fruit
- Applesauce or pureed fruit with nuts and sliced fruit
- Apple or banana slices with peanut butter
- Trail mix – pretzels, raisins, dried cereal/fruit and nuts
- Pitas or breadsticks with hummus dip
- Crackers and cheese or peanut butter
- Buttered popcorn

- Cookies with a glass of whole milk
- Canned tuna or salmon with crackers
- Hard boiled egg
- Tortilla chips or potato chips with guacamole, salsa and sour cream
- Puddings – rice, tapioca, milk or soy based
- Ice cream, frozen yogurt or sorbet

Ask a member of your healthcare team for these handouts:

- High Energy and High Protein Foods
- How to Increase the Amount of Protein in Your Diet

Ask to talk to a registered dietitian in the cancer centre if you are not able to eat or you are losing weight.

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