

## **Maximizing Nutrition for Lung Health: Nutritional Guidelines for People with COPD**

Nutrition is important for people with lung disease. Eating a healthy diet will help you feel better and is an important part of managing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Food is your body's fuel and provides the energy your body needs to perform all of your daily functions. The muscles used in breathing require more energy (calories) if you have COPD compared to individuals without COPD. In addition, good nutrition helps your body fight infections, which are common if you have COPD.

Maintaining a healthy weight is especially important for people with COPD. Overweight individuals may have more difficulty breathing and may demand more oxygen. Underweight individuals may feel weak and tired, and perhaps more susceptibility to infections, including chest infections such as pneumonia. People with COPD who maintain a healthy weight live longer and enjoy improved quality of life compared to those who do not.

### **Your diet**

Consider these suggestions:

- Select a variety of foods to eat every day to ensure that you consume all the vitamins and minerals needed by your body to maintain health
- Try to eat at least two to three servings of fruits and three to five servings of vegetables each day
- Consume two to three servings of low-fat dairy foods each day
- Choose lean proteins, such as egg whites, fish and shellfish, white meat chicken and turkey, and tenderloin cuts of beef and pork
- Limit your dietary sodium to 2300 milligrams/day
- Choose no-added-salt or low-sodium foods, if necessary
- Serve foods with high-nutrient value and healthy fats
- Limit consumption of foods with added sugar and refined starches, especially those with little nutritional value, such as cakes, cookies, pies, and candies

# Health PEI

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- Include the following foods if you have a poor appetite or need to gain weight:
  - Nuts (unsalted)
  - Granola
  - Avocados
  - Peanut butter
  - Olive oil
  - Tuna fish
  - Yogurt
- Try Lactaid<sup>®</sup> products to avoid gastrointestinal symptoms, if you are lactose intolerant
- Aim for 25–35 grams of dietary fiber/day from foods such as whole grains, beans, vegetables, and fruits (includes soluble and insoluble fiber)
- Increase dietary fiber gradually to avoid excessive gas, bloating, and similar symptoms
- Use Beano<sup>®</sup> to help you digest beans, broccoli, or other foods that you have difficulty tolerating
- Avoid foods that cause you to experience gas or bloating, if products like Lactaid or Beano are not helpful
- Avoid chewing gum and using straws to help limit swallowed air, which can cause bloating and gassiness
- Try to avoid very hot or cold foods and beverages, if coughing during meals is problematic—these foods may stimulate the cough reflex
- Adjust your calorie level (the quantity of food you eat) to achieve a healthy weight
- Consult with a registered or licensed dietitian for assistance in modifying your diet, especially if you have other diseases that also require diet modifications

## Food preparation

Use these tips when preparing meals:

- Chop food into small pieces to make chewing less of a chore
- Cook foods well, so they are softer textured
- Avoid overcooking meats, which may cause toughening
- Prepare foods ahead of time or when you have more energy, which helps make preparation simple when you are the most tired
- Have someone assist you with preparing meals and shopping, when possible
- Consider home-delivered meals if you tire easily

## Mealtime

Try these suggestions for planning meals:

- Try to eat five to six small meals and snacks each day, rather than fewer larger meals, to help keep your metabolism burning calories efficiently
- Avoid large meals, which helps minimize the pressure on your diaphragm (the muscle in the abdomen used for breathing) and may lessen shortness of breath during meals
- Wear your nasal cannula while eating, if continuous oxygen is prescribed, and even if you do not require continuous oxygen, you may find it helpful to wear the cannula during and after meals when eating and digestion use more oxygen
- Relax at mealtimes and try to make eating pleasurable
- Rest before you eat, so you have more energy to enjoy mealtimes
- Eat your biggest meal at the time of day when you generally feel the best and have the most energy

## Beverages

Follow these suggestions pertaining to the beverages you drink:

- Avoid carbonated and sugary beverages
- Drink at least six to eight 8-oz glasses of water or other beverages each day, unless your doctor has advised you to limit your fluids
- Reduce the use of beverages at mealtimes to minimize pressure on the diaphragm
- Drink more water, if you are troubled by excessive mucus:
  - This may help thin out the mucus, so it is less uncomfortable
  - Drinking water also helps keep the airways moist and prevents dehydration
- Limit consumption of alcohol

## Medications

Know about the medications you are taking:

- Talk to your physician about changing when you take certain medication with regard to mealtimes, if you think these medications alter your sense of taste
- Ask about any interactions alcohol may have with prescription and over-the-counter medications

## References and recommended readings

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Evidence Analysis Library<sup>®</sup>. Available to subscribers at:

<http://www.adaevidencelibrary.com/topic.cfm?cat=3708>. Accessed May 31, 2011.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Nutrition Care Manual<sup>®</sup>. Available to subscribers at:

[www.nutritioncaremanual.org](http://www.nutritioncaremanual.org). Accessed May 31, 2011.

Mahan LK, Escott-Stump S, Raymond JL. *Krauses's Food and Nutrition Care Process*. 13th ed. St Louis, MO: Elsevier Saunders; 2012.