

Coping With Nutrition-Related Consequences of Lung Cancer

Increasing Appetite and Managing Early Satiety

If you experience poor appetite or quickly become full, the following tips can be helpful:

- Eat something within an hour of waking.
- Eat a small high-calorie, high-protein snack every two to three hours.
- Set a timer to remind you when to eat or ask a caregiver to remind you.
- Don't nap for longer than two hours so that you don't sleep through snack time.
- Prepare easy-to-grab snacks such as hard-boiled eggs, blended foods such as smoothies or milkshakes, nuts, peanut butter sandwiches, or individual cups of fruit, yogurt, or cottage cheese or ask a caregiver to do this.
- Make meals more enjoyable by placing flowers on the table, eating with friends, or listening to music while eating.
- Use nutritional supplements at mealtimes if you can't tolerate solid foods.
- Regular bowel movements are important. If you're irregular, contact your treatment team to obtain a bowel management protocol that keeps you regular.
- If your appetite doesn't improve, check with your doctor about medications to help increase appetite or gastric emptying.
- Be as physically active as possible.

Maintaining Weight

If you're experiencing unintended weight loss, these strategies may help you increase your calorie and protein intake, which can help the situation:

- Consume small, frequent meals and don't skip meals.
- Eat breakfast foods at any meal if you find them more appealing and easier to eat.
- Add 1 cup of dry milk powder to 1 qt of regular milk to make fortified milk.
- Add fat to foods (eg, melt butter and mix into applesauce with cinnamon and sugar, add oil or butter to broths, add oil to noodles, bread, rice, and hot cereals).
- If you're worried about consuming unhealthful foods, try adding healthful fats and sugars, such as avocados, monounsaturated sources of oil, coconut oil, nuts and nut butters, sunflower seeds, honey, maple syrup, and plain full-fat yogurt, to what you're eating. These can be good ways to add calories to fruit or green smoothies.
- Don't eat your favorite foods when you're nauseated. Save those for good days.
- If you can tolerate solid foods and are using nutritional supplements for extra calories, make sure you don't use them as meal replacements, as you may miss out on important nutrients provided by solid foods. It's best to consume 1/2 cup of such supplements after each meal or as snacks during the day. If you're getting nutrition only from supplement drinks, ask your dietitian exactly how many cans you need to meet your calorie needs.

Fighting Fatigue

Fatigue is a common side effect for those facing lung cancer. There are no medications to address fatigue, but try these tips:

- Be as physically active as possible, including exercising whenever you can. Request a referral to an exercise or rehab program, if available.
- Rest when you feel the worst, and be active during the times of day that you feel the best.
- Make sure to get quality sleep.
- Ask friends and family to help by shopping and preparing meals so you can spend your energy on leisure activity.
- Stock the kitchen with easy-to-prepare and easy-to-eat foods.
- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks.
- Drink enough water because dehydration can increase feelings of fatigue.