



## COPD and Daily Life

### COPD and Healthy Eating

Nutrition and lung disease can be a complex issue. This is because different lung diseases come with unique nutritional challenges. Some lung diseases include asthma, bronchitis, cystic fibrosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Each disease comes with different treatments, its own set of symptoms and with that, side effects that may affect our body's nutritional status. Common challenges may include increased or decreased appetite, weight gain or weight loss, and inability to adequately meet your nutritional needs.

However, there is one thing they all have in common: no matter what your lung disease is, the food you eat should contribute to your overall health. Working with a registered dietitian and developing a meal plan that best works for you might be a good idea. Be sure that you consume whole foods and avoid processed foods whenever possible.

Before starting your own meal plan, consider the following:

#### **1. DO YOU KNOW WHAT SIDE EFFECTS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING BECAUSE OF YOUR DISEASE OR MEDICATION?**

For instance, fatigue, headaches, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing or acid reflux may be common symptoms you experience on a daily basis. These symptoms can leave you feeling exhausted and defeated when it comes to having your next meal.

Choosing easily prepared foods that require minimal prep work is a great idea, because you avoid spending too much energy prior to eating. If you are experiencing difficulty swallowing, choosing soft or puréed foods can help increase intake without risk of choking. You may also want to consider adding a well-balanced smoothie or protein shake in between meals to ensure you get all the necessary nutrients.





Liquids like smoothies and shakes also keep you hydrated. Many patients with lung disease experience gastroesophageal reflux or GERD as a result of excessive coughing, throat irritation or certain foods. There are a few things you can do to help ease these symptoms.

This includes:

- Eating smaller, frequent meals so food can be digested more easily
- Maintaining an upright position for 30-60 minutes before, after and during meal times
- Avoiding patient-specific “trigger” foods such as foods that are high in fat, spicy, highly acidic (such as citrus or tomato-based products)

## **2. ARE YOUR MEALS WELL BALANCED?**

While the specific amounts of different foods may vary case by case depending on your individual needs, all foods should be healthy and well rounded. When creating a meal, an easy rule to try and follow is more colour equals more nutrients! Including a variety of fruit and vegetables helps to adequately meet your micronutrient needs. People with lung disease often require increased protein because of their

medication, to prevent muscle weakening. Including protein-rich foods in all meals and snacks will help ensure you reach your daily goals. Remember that all foods are not created equal and consult Canada’s Food Guide and adjust amounts to your specific needs. Be sure you include water as a staple for all meals and avoid drinks with added sugar.

## **3. ARE YOUR AMOUNTS MANAGEABLE?**

Meeting your daily calorie needs can be difficult, frustrating and tiring. Since air and food fight for space, it can be difficult to get enough calories and protein throughout the day. Eating smaller meals and snacks more frequently instead of fewer larger meals can be helpful. Choosing smaller, nutrient dense meals that focus on adequate protein sources (think fish, chicken, beans, tofu and low-fat dairy products) are essential to maintaining lean muscle mass and preventing weight loss. Don’t be afraid to modify the texture of foods to chopped or puréed to make eating easier.

Keep in mind that no matter what your dietary needs may be at a given time, the overall goal is to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and nourishing your body through healthy food.

## COPD and Intimacy

Intimacy is something that can still be a part of your life. It is important to be honest with your partner and discuss your limitations as a result of shortness of breath and other symptoms associated with COPD. Plan to have sex when you are rested. Avoid eating a large meal or drinking a lot of alcohol beforehand, so you will not get breathless.

Your COPD medications should not interfere with sexual function. You may want to take a dose of your quick-relief medicine (bronchodilator) before sex to reduce breathlessness. Go slowly and use any sexual position that is comfortable and pleasurable for you and your partner.

## Advance Care Planning

It's important to have a voice in your treatment plan. But there may come a time when you are unable to express your treatment wishes to healthcare providers. This is why it is important to plan ahead and make sure your loved ones are aware of your wishes and can act on them if you are unable to.

- Discuss your wishes with your friends and family or whomever may make decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so.
- Write down your wishes and speak with your healthcare providers and financial or legal professionals. Work together to develop an "Advance Care Plan" or "Healthcare (Advance) Directive"
- Discuss and identify a substitute decision maker. This person can make decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so.
- Review your treatment options with your doctor.

Please visit <http://www.advancecareplanning.ca> for great information on talking to your loved ones.