NHS
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Information for patients and carers

Living with COPD
The Importance of Good Nutrition

Why is nutrition important in COPD?

- Whilst living with COPD, good nutrition is important in improving symptoms and supporting your immune system

- Weight loss is common in COPD and can increase your risk of acute exacerbations and hospital admissions. If you are struggling to eat enough it's important to take steps to maintain your weight. This leaflet can support you to do so

Components of a healthy diet

Protein

Needed for the maintenance and repair of muscles; try to eat protein foods at least twice a day (or 3 or 4 times if you've lost weight).

Sources: **Meat, fish, poultry, beans, lentils, tofu, eggs, cheese.**

Carbohydrate

Provide energy, vitamins, minerals and fibre. Try to include a starchy food with each meal, choosing whole grain sources where possible.

Sources: **Bread, chapatis, cereal, potatoes, plantain, rice, pasta, noodles.**

Sugary foods such as puddings, biscuits and juices also fall into this category but should be taken more moderately.

Dairy and alternatives

Provide calcium for healthy bones. This is especially important in COPD as medications and reduced activity levels increase your vulnerability to weaker bones.

Sources**: Milk, cheese, yoghurt, cream and dairy free alternatives**
Other calcium sources: **leafy green vegables, beans, nuts, seeds, seafood.**

Components of a healthy diet

Fruit and vegetables

Provide vitamins, minerals and fibre which supports healthy bowel movements. Aim for 5 portions per day, the more variety the better. A portion would be one apple/orange/banana, or two of a smaller fruit such as plums or satsumas. For vegetables this would look like two broccoli spears or three tablespoons of peas or sweetcorn. If you struggle with fruit and veg going off - try freezing them.

Remember

- Potatoes, cassava and plantain do not count towards your 5 a day
- If you are having dried fruit keep the same system as above (e.g. 2 x dried apricots) and make sure you are not exceeding this

Oils and other fat sources

Have many roles in the body including facilitating the absorption of vitamins A, D, E & K. Try to get your fat from unsaturated sources such as rapeseed or olive oil, nuts, avocado and oily fish.

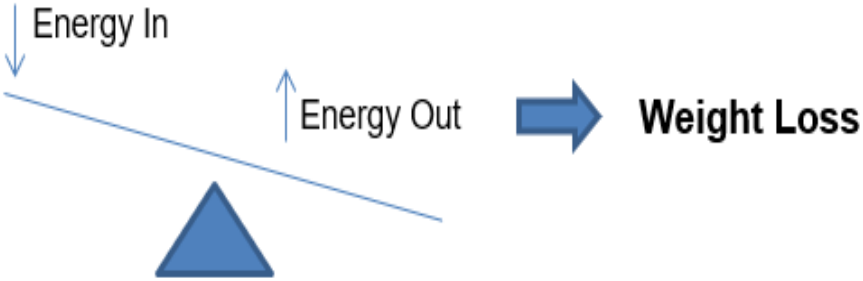
Other sources include lard, butter, ghee, processed meat, crisps and bakery products – these are higher in saturated fat and should be taken in smaller amounts.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is essential for good bone health. Throughout spring and summer spending 10 minutes outside with exposed skin will help build up vitamin D levels. During the winter months it is recommended that UK adults take a daily supplement. If you don't get much sunlight exposure or are on a steroid medication you may need to take a supplement all year round. You can speak with your GP or pharmacist about the appropriate supplementation for you. If you are taking any other supplement, please seek advice from your GP or pharmacist.

If you have noticed unintentional weight loss…

In COPD, you use more energy for breathing and to fight infections. You may also eat less because of shortness of breath and reduced appetite. As a result, the scales of energy balance can be tipped resulting in weight loss:



If you are unable to weigh yourself regularly you can monitor how your clothes and jewellery fit you. If you notice **unintentional weight loss,** it is important to take steps to counteract this and to consider contacting your GP as you may need to see a Dietitian. Below are some steps you can take yourself to prevent further weight loss:

1. Adding fat sources to meals

Fats are densely packed with energy so are a good way of increasing your intake without altering portion size. Examples:

- Mix double cream into soups
- Grate cheese into your mashed potato, omelettes, baked beans
- Use generous amounts of oil when cooking / dressing foods
- Choose ‘full fat’ options when shopping

2. Include nourishing drinks

These are a great easy way of increasing energy intake. Examples

- Hot milky drinks like hot chocolate, malted milk drinks, coffees
- Yoghurt drinks or smoothies made with nut butters/ yoghurt

3. Make things easier for yourself

- Ask family or friends for help with shopping, cooking or ordering food
- Use convenience foods such as tinned items and ready meals
- Consider using meal delivery services
- Prepare food in bulk and freeze individual portions to microwave or bake on the day

4. Aim for 4-6 small meals per day

Having smaller portions more regularly can be more manageable if you have a poor appetite or find eating large amounts tiring.

5. Avoid drinking large volumes with your meals

This can make you feel full and limit your food intake. Eating lots of vegetables can have a similar effect, so make sure you prioritise eating the protein and fat sources on your plate.

6. Nutritional supplements

It may be the case that you are not able to meet your energy needs with diet alone. In which case you may require nutritional supplement drinks to keep well nourished. If taking nutritional supplements, it is also encouraged that you exercise to optimise the benefits. If you think supplement drinks may be indicated for you contact your GP or dietitian.

Your Dietitian suggests

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Symptom management

You may find that inhalers, oxygen and nebulisers cause your mouth to become dry. Preparing and eating meals may also be affected by breathing difficulty. Below are some tips on managing these symptoms:

Taste changes

- Maintain good oral hygiene; regularly clean teeth/dentures and rinse mouth out after using steroid inhalers to prevent oral thrush
- Experiment with different flavours and spices – you may like what you have previously disliked, and tastes may continue to change

Dry mouth

- Opt for softer moist foods and avoid spicy, dry or acidic foods
- Suck fruit sweets or ice cubes made with squash
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids
- Ask your GP or pharmacist about artificial saliva sprays

Managing breathing difficulty

- Eat little and often rather than having large meals
- Relax and take your time when eating
- Softer / minced consistencies may be more manageable
- Prepare multiple portions of meals to reduce effort of cooking, and make use of convenience foods such as ready meals

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Dietitians on **01772 522467.**

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk
www.accessable.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware
https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/
www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com
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All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:
patientexperienceandinvolvem@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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