



Appetite, loss of

This information in the 'Helpful hints' series is intended as a guide, to help you deal with your loss of appetite until you can talk to your doctor. It is not intended to replace medical advice.

What causes loss of appetite?

There is a big difference between appetite and hunger. Appetite is the desire for food, hunger is the need for food. Even when you have no appetite, your body still needs food and fluids.

A loss of appetite can be caused by large number of factors including your illness or side-effects of your treatment e.g. sore mouth, nausea, constipation, taste changes.

Please ask your medical team for advice on how to manage these symptoms. If you would like information on any of these topics, please ask at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre.

However, it is important to talk to your doctor if a problem persists.

What can you do until you get medical help?

- try to make your mealtimes as relaxed and pleasant as possible
- be easy on yourself, eat little but often, e.g. small snacks every 2 hours
- Ignore 'normal' meal patterns e.g. breakfast cereals for dinner may be easier for you
- try new tastes, you may find you like them
- remember that sometimes preparing food can put you off eating it, so accept an offer from someone else to make a meal for you
- try ready-made meals to make things easier for you
- try eating a little more when you are having a better day.

- try a glass of wine or sherry to stimulate your appetite, but check with your doctor first
- try a gentle walk before mealtimes, as exercise can stimulate your appetite and open a window for fresh air.
- keep a few tasty healthy snacks readily available, e.g. biscuits to dunk in tea, yoghurts, small custard pots.
- remember cool or cold food may be better, if the smell of food puts you off

Tips for the cook!

Whether you cook for yourself, or for someone else, it can be worrying and disappointing to spend time preparing food only for it to be uneaten. Here are a few hints.

Remember:

- several small snacks are as good as a large meal
- large portions may be overwhelming and off-putting
- try serving small 'child size' portions, a second helping may then be requested!
- different food combinations, different textures and tastes may help
- putting together foods of different colours adds interest
- a garnish such as a sprig of parsley on the food may look appealing
- even a glass of water is made 'special' with a cube of ice and a slice of lemon
- ready made meals may make it easier for you to make life simple and eat something you fancy - use tinned foods or oven/microwave meals. If you would like further information, please ask at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre.

Remember to tell your doctor about your symptoms.