



Loss of Appetite

This information is 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?

A loss of appetite can be caused by many factors including your illness or side-effects of your treatment, e.g. sore mouth, nausea, constipation and 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 as pleasant as possible
- be easy on yourself, eat little and often, e.g. small snacks between meals
- ignore 'normal' meal patterns, for example 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
- ready-made meals can make things easier for you
- eat a little more when you are having a better day
- try to get extra energy from your liquids by having things such as milky tea or coffee, milkshakes, fruit juices or fizzy drinks left to go flat
- a glass of wine or sherry can stimulate your appetite, but check with your doctor first
- try a gentle walk before mealtimes, as exercise can stimulate your appetite
- open a window for some fresh air

- keep a few snacks readily available, e.g. biscuits to dunk in tea, yogurts, small custard pots
- remember cool or cold food may be better, if the smell of food puts you off
- it is not necessary to have hot cooked meals - having regular cold snack foods can be just as good
- if your appetite is better at particular times of the day, then make the most of this and have a larger meal at this time

Tips for the cook!

Whether you cook for yourself or someone else cooks for you, it can be worrying and disappointing to spend time preparing food only for it not to be eaten. 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 smaller portions of main meals e.g. use a side plate. A second helping may then be requested
- different food combinations, different textures and tastes may help
- putting together foods of different colours adds interest
- 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 have lost weight due to poor appetite

You may find it beneficial to try some of the following, higher energy foods and drinks to help build you up:

- full fat dairy products, e.g. milk, cheese, yogurts
- desserts, e.g. custard, rice pudding or crème caramel
- scones and pastries
- eggs
- milkshakes
- hot chocolate, Horlicks, Ovaltine or milky coffee

You could also add the following into your food to 'fortify' it:

- butter
- vegetable or olive oil
- ground nuts
- nut butters
- olive tapenade, hummus or dips
- cream
- condensed milk
- avocado (guacamole or just spread onto toast/bread)
- grated cheese
- coconut cream
- dips
- pesto sauce
- mayonnaise
- sugar
- honey
- syrup
- jam
- custard

If you would like further information, please ask at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre.

Remember to tell your doctor about your symptoms.