



MDwise

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COPD: Keeping Your Diet Healthy

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Introduction

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you may have little appetite or feel too tired to prepare and eat meals. But eating regularly and eating healthy foods is important because food:

- Provides your body with the energy it needs to function, such as for breathing and digestion.
- Provides you with the energy you need for daily activities.
- Helps strengthen your body's natural defense system (immune system), making it easier to avoid infections.

You can take simple steps to be sure you eat healthy foods on a regular basis. But because people with COPD often have other health problems that may restrict the foods they can eat, always talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian before making changes in your diet.

Tips for eating with COPD

People with COPD often have trouble preparing foods and eating. The following tips can make eating easier and help you get necessary nutrition. But if you have other health problems that may restrict the foods you can eat, talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian before making changes in your diet.

Make eating easier

- Choose foods that are easy to prepare.
- Eat in a relaxed atmosphere.
- Eat with friends and family.
- If you eat a main meal, try to eat it early. This way, you will have energy throughout more of the day.
- Try to include a favorite food in your meals.

Avoid shortness of breath while eating

- Stop smoking. It is never too late to quit smoking. No matter how long you have had COPD or how serious it is, quitting smoking will help slow the disease and improve your quality of life.
- Use medicines that make breathing easier and/or clear your airways about 1 hour before eating.
- Rest before eating if eating makes you short of breath or tired.
- Clear your lungs beforehand. Use your bronchodilator medicine before you eat. This can help you breathe better during your meal.
- Eat while sitting up. This helps remove pressure on your lungs.
- If you use oxygen, use it while eating. Eating and digestion require energy, which causes your body to use more oxygen.
- Eat six small meals each day instead of three large ones so that your stomach is never extremely full. A full stomach can interfere with breathing by pushing on the diaphragm.
- Drink your beverage at the end of the meal. Drinking before or during the meal can fill you up more quickly.
- Avoid or eat only small amounts of gas-forming foods (they bloat the abdomen and make breathing difficult). These include onions, cauliflower, broccoli, melons, peas, corn, cucumbers, cabbage, brussels sprouts, turnips, raw apples, and beans (except green beans). Fried and greasy foods can also cause gas or bloating.
- Eat and chew slowly so you are less likely to become short of breath. Try putting your spoon or fork down between bites to slow your eating speed.
- If you have a hard time breathing in the morning, do not skip breakfast. Have a liquid nutritional drink (such as Ensure) instead.

Eat healthy foods

- Eat a varied diet. Eat fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cereal and grains, and meats.
- Avoid foods that are difficult to chew.
- Don't waste energy consuming foods with little nutritional value, such as potato chips, candy bars, and soft drinks.

Related Information

- COPD: Avoiding Weight Loss

Credits

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