



Northeast Cancer Centre
Health Sciences North
a Cancer Care Ontario partner

Centre de cancérologie du Nord-Est
Horizon Santé-Nord
un partenaire d'Action Cancer Ontario

Date: _____

Client's Name: _____

Registered Dietitian's Name: _____

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Poor Appetite and Feeling Full After a Few Bites

These are very common problems experienced by people with cancer and may be due to a number of factors like: anemia, poor eating habits, gastrointestinal problems, lack of sleep, difficulty breathing, stress, depression, pain and cancer treatments. It is important to eat enough to keep your strength up and help your body heal.

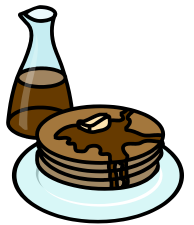
Helpful Hints:

Making every mouthful count



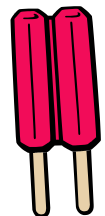
- Maintaining your weight is important. Make an effort to eat regularly, even if it is only a few bites at a time.
- Eat by our watch, your stomach may not let you know when it is meal time; try to have a meal or snack every 2 hours
- Choose high protein, high calorie foods. Don't fill up on *low calorie* foods and beverages such as coffee, tea, water, broths, and "diet" products.
- Eat more during the times of the day when you feel the hungriest.
- Drink calorie and nutrient rich beverages throughout the day such as milk, juice, soup or nutritional supplements.

- If you are losing weight, high calorie liquids such as milkshakes, Carnation Breakfast Anytime® and commercial nutritional supplements may be helpful. The dietitian can advise you on the most suitable product and quantity to meet your nutritional needs.
- Eat a number of small snacks during the day to make up for eating less at mealtimes. Bring snacks to your appointments and treatments.
- Foods that seem unacceptable today may be appealing tomorrow. Keep an open mind when trying foods, and experiment often.
- Eat *what* you feel like, *when* you feel like it. You don't have to eat foods that are typically served at that time of day (e.g., pancakes for dinner or pasta for breakfast).



Meal preparation

- Keep snacks readily available (e.g., cheese & crackers, dried fruits & nuts, milkshakes, yogurt, baked goods, cereals, canned puddings, ice cream, cottage cheese).
- Keep ready-to-eat, easily prepared foods on hand for those days when you don't feel like cooking (e.g., canned foods, frozen dinners). Many grocery stores (in the "deli" sections) offer a variety of prepared salads & main entrees.
- When you are feeling well, prepare extra servings of your favourite foods and freeze them for the times you don't feel like cooking.
- Change the form of foods (e.g., frozen or canned fruits & vegetables instead of fresh fruit & vegetables, or adding fruit into a milkshake). It may make them easier to eat.
- Try preparing softer, cooler, or frozen foods like yogurt, popsicles, Jell-O® and milkshakes.
- If eating makes you feel fatigued and short of breath, eat smaller meals more often and use soft foods or liquids such as: milkshakes, puddings, custards, yogurt, cottage cheese and ice cream.



- Take advantage of timesaving appliances (e.g., food processors, crock pots or slow cookers, and microwave ovens).
- Accept help from family and friends.
- Join the “Meals on Wheels” program if available in your community. Ask your doctor or another member of the health care team for additional information about this program.

Before eating

- Try to have any pain or nausea under control prior to meal times. Take pain or anti-nausea medication 30-60 minutes before eating.
- If possible, go for a light walk before meal times. Fresh air can stimulate your appetite.
- Some vitamin/ mineral tonics taken before meals (i.e., Maltevol-12®) may stimulate your appetite. Check with your doctor.
- A glass of wine, beer or sherry prior to a meal may stimulate your appetite. Check with your doctor first.

Environment

- Pleasant smells may stimulate your appetite. However, if you find strong cooking odours bother you, you may want to stay out of the kitchen when meals are being prepared, and if possible, open windows to freshen the air.
- Make eating more enjoyable by varying food colours and using garnishes. Create a pleasant atmosphere with soft music and an attractive place setting.
- Eat in the company of others whenever possible
- Get plenty of rest



Feeling full

- Get the satisfaction of finishing a meal by taking only small portions (use a small plate). You can always have second helpings.
- Limit the amount of liquid you drink *with* your meals. If necessary for swallowing, take only small sips at mealtimes.
- Take liquids 30-60 minutes before or after your meals. Try nutritious drinks such as: milkshakes, commercial nutritional supplements, Carnation Breakfast Anytime®, milk, fruit or vegetable juice.
- Avoid drinking beverages through a straw
- Limit use of high fat foods (e.g., fried foods, potato chips, sausages, rich sauces, gravy, margarine, butter, oil, mayonnaise, whipping cream) as these foods will fill you up and take longer to digest.
- Chew foods well and eat meals slowly.
- Avoid gas forming foods (e.g., baked beans, legumes, cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts, onions, garlic).
- Avoid carbonated beverages and gum.
- Avoid very high fibre foods that may contribute to satiety and tend to be lower in calories (e.g., bran cereals, brown rice, multigrain pasta, bran muffins, 12 grain bread).



References:

BC Cancer Agency. (2005). *Appetite and/or Weight Loss (Anorexia/Cachexia) Self Care*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/PSMPC/ACachexia/Selfcare/Default.htm>

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