



Patient/carer information: COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and nutrition

COPD can increase the body's need for both energy (calories) and protein because breathing can use more energy than normal. Eating enough to meet this increased need can be more difficult when feeling short of breath.

This situation can lead to unplanned weight loss, being too thin and/or reduced appetite.

The following information may also be helpful for those with other long term lung diseases.

People with COPD who are too thin are more likely to:

- Be admitted to hospital
- Feel more breathless
- Have more symptoms

Keeping your weight stable and not being too thin can help by:

- Stopping COPD symptoms getting worse
- Improving quality of life
- Reducing the feeling of shortness of breath

What can I do?

- **Weigh yourself at least once per month** and aim to keep your weight stable – keeping a record of your weight can be helpful
- **Rest before eating** to avoid feeling breathless, eat slowly and sit upright when eating
- **Eat a balanced diet** - our bodies need us to eat a range of different foods every day including:
 - Starchy foods such as bread, pasta, rice, cereals, potatoes – aim for a serving at each meal
 - Protein such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans/lentils, quorn, soya – aim for a serving at each meal
 - Milk and milk containing foods such as yogurt, fromage frais, cheese – aim for 2 – 3 portions per day
 - Fruit and vegetables – aim for 5 portions per day
 - Fluid – aim for at least 1600ml (8 mugs or 10 cups) per day
- **If feeling short of breath makes eating large meals difficult** – try eating smaller portions more often during the day, for example split 3 large meals into 6 half size portions per day
- **If using an oxygen mask makes chewing difficult** – try choosing soft foods which require little chewing. You can find a leaflet on soft foods on the following website: <https://www.chilternccg.nhs.uk/public/your-services/your-health-services/care-homes/nutrition/>
- **If cooking is difficult** – use ready meals or meal delivery companies (such as Wiltshire Farm Foods or Oakhouse Foods)
- **If you have a dry mouth** – sip drinks throughout the day and choose sharp and/or fizzy drinks such as lemonade or lemon squash; try sucking sharp fruit sweets or ice cubes made with fruit juice or squash; try to drink at least 1600ml (8 mugs or 10 cups) of fluid every day, unless you have been advised to drink less than this
- **If you have taste changes** – clean your teeth/dentures twice per day; use a mouthwash if that helps; choose foods you enjoy and try new foods and different seasonings and sauces; if you have gone off a particular food, try it again in a few weeks time because your tastes may have changed again
- **If you lose weight without trying to, if you think you are too thin or during an exacerbation:**
 - **Change to weighing yourself weekly** and keep a record of your weight
 - **Tell your surgery's practice or respiratory nurse** and/or your GP if you are losing weight without trying to
 - **Follow advice in 'Food first: Eating well for small appetites' leaflet** which can help to prevent and treat unplanned weight loss and help weight regain. You can find the leaflet on the following website: www.bucksformulary.nhs.uk/docs/avc/, or your surgery's practice or respiratory nurse, a member of the Bucks Integrated Respiratory Service (BIRS) or your GP can give you a printed copy of this leaflet

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