

## **Maximizing Nutrition for Lung Health: Nutritional Guidelines for People With COPD**

### **Why nutrition matters for people with lung disease**

- Eating a healthy diet will help you feel better and is an important part of managing COPD.
- Food is your body's fuel and provides the energy your body needs to perform all of your daily functions.
- The muscles used in breathing may require up to 10 times more energy (calories) in people with COPD than those without COPD.
- The types and amounts of foods you eat affect your metabolism, including how much carbon dioxide is produced by digestion. Too much carbon dioxide can make you feel weak and fatigued.
- Good nutrition helps the body fight infections, which can be common in COPD.
- Maintaining a healthy weight is especially important for people with COPD. Being overweight can make breathing more difficult and may demand more oxygen. Being underweight can make you feel weak and tired, and may make you more susceptible to infections, including chest infections such as pneumonia. People with COPD who maintain a healthy weight live longer and enjoy improved quality of life compared to those who do not.

### **What to eat and drink**

- Try to eat at least two to three servings of fruits and three to five servings of vegetables each day.
- Consume two to three servings of low-fat dairy foods each day. If you are lactose intolerant, use Lactaid<sup>®</sup> products to avoid gastrointestinal symptoms.
- Aim for 25-35 grams of dietary fiber each day from foods such as whole grains, beans, vegetables, and fruits (includes soluble and insoluble fiber). Increase dietary fiber gradually to avoid excessive gas, bloating, and similar symptoms. Use Beano<sup>®</sup> to help you digest beans, broccoli, or other foods that you have difficulty tolerating.
- Choose lean proteins, such as egg whites, fish and shellfish, white meat chicken and turkey, and tenderloin cuts of beef and pork.
- Drink at least six to eight 8-fl-oz glasses of water or other beverages each day, unless your doctor has advised you to limit your fluids.

### **What to limit or avoid in your diet**

- Limit your dietary sodium to 2000 mg daily. Choose no-added-salt or low-sodium foods.
- Limit consumption of foods with added sugar and refined starches, especially those with little nutritional value, such as cakes, cookies, pies, and candies. Sugars cause production of excess carbon monoxide in the bloodstream, which can increase fatigue.
- Avoid carbonated and sugary beverages.
- Avoid foods that cause you to experience gas or bloating if products like Lactaid or Beano are not helpful.

### **Other tips**

- Try to eat five to six small meals and snacks each day, rather than fewer larger meals. This will help keep your metabolism burning calories efficiently. Also avoiding large meals helps

minimize the pressure on your diaphragm (the muscle in the abdomen used for breathing) and may lessen shortness of breath during meals.

- Wear your nasal cannula while eating if continuous oxygen is prescribed. Even if you do not require continuous oxygen, you may find it helpful to wear the cannula during and after meals when eating and digestion use more oxygen.
- Relax at meal times; try to make eating pleasurable. Rest before you eat so you have more energy to enjoy mealtimes.
- Eat your biggest meal at the time of day when you generally feel the best and have the most energy.
- Chop food into small pieces to make chewing less of a chore. Cook foods well so they are softer textured; avoid overcooking meats, which may cause toughening.
- Prepare foods ahead of time or when you have more energy; this helps make preparation simple when you are most tired. When possible, have someone assist you with preparing meals and shopping. Home-delivered meals are an option as well.
- Try to avoid very hot or cold foods and beverages if coughing during meals is problematic; these foods may stimulate the cough reflex.
- Reduce the use of beverages at mealtimes to minimize pressure on the diaphragm.
- Drink more water If you are troubled by excessive mucus. This may help thin out the mucus so it is less uncomfortable. Drinking water also helps keep the airways moist and prevents dehydration.
- Limit dairy products only if they seem to worsen your symptoms. Otherwise they are an important part of a healthy diet, especially if you have osteoporosis.
- Talk to your physician about changing the timing of when you take certain medications, with regards to meals, if you think these medications alter your sense of taste.
- Eat foods with high-nutrient value and healthy fats, if you have a poor appetite or need to gain weight; include nuts (unsalted), granola, avocado, peanut butter, olive oil, tuna fish, and yogurt in your diet.
- Choose a variety of foods to eat every day to ensure that you consume all the vitamins and minerals needed by your body to maintain health.
- Limit alcohol and ask about any interactions alcohol may have with prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- Avoid chewing gum and use of straws to limit swallowed air, which can cause bloating and gassiness.
- Adjust your calorie level (the quantity of food you eat) to achieve a healthy weight.
- Consult with a Registered or Licensed Dietitian for assistance in modifying your diet, especially if you have other diseases that also require diet modifications.

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