



Learning to live with a loss of appetite

There are many reasons for a lack of appetite. Losing your appetite can be long term, such as when it is related to medications or depression. It can also just happen once in a while, like when you have the flu. Having no appetite becomes a problem when it causes you to skip meals. Food provides energy to think and make your muscles move. Food also feeds your immune system, which helps to fight off the HIV virus. When you don't eat, you starve your brain, muscles, and your immune system, causing your body to not work as well as it should.

How do you prevent starving your body? EAT! Unfortunately, you can't rely on your hunger signal to tell you when to eat. If you could, you wouldn't be struggling with a poor appetite, would you? Without a reliable hunger signal to tell you when to eat, you will have to tell yourself. In other words, you will have to force yourself to eat even if you don't feel hungry. It's really not as bad as it sounds, and your hunger signal should return over time. Try these tips and keep an eye on your weight. If you begin or continue to lose weight, see our dietitian for personalized help.

- ✓ Eat smaller portions more often. Don't rely on your hunger signal to tell you when to eat.
- ✓ Make the most of each mouthful. Even if you cannot eat much food, choose foods that are high in calories and protein.
- ✓ Add ingredients to maximize your nutrition (see below). Ask our dietitian for individualized help.
- ✓ Try different tastes to stimulate your appetite: bitter, sour, salty, or sweet. Try hard candy or chewing gum.
- ✓ Do some mild to moderate exercise before eating to make you hungry, such as a short walk or house cleaning.
- ✓ Drink liquids separately from meals. They fill you up and provide little energy. Drink 100% juice, milk, or shakes between meals instead of low-calorie fluids like tea, broth, or coffee.
- ✓ Try making your own shakes (ask our dietitian for recipes) or use liquid nutrition supplements like Advera® or Ensure® to replace an occasional meal.
- ✓ Ask your medical provider about an appetite stimulant such as Megace® or Marinol®.

To increase your CALORIES...		To increase your PROTEIN...	
ADD:	TO:	ADD:	TO:
Dried fruit, nuts, honey, jam, or syrup	Hot or cold cereal, trail mix, desserts, pancakes, waffles	Peanut butter, nuts	Sauces, shakes, pancakes, fruits and veggies (celery, apples), hot cereal
Avocado, olives, salad dressing	Sandwiches, salads, casseroles	Leftover chicken, fish, cheese, hard-boiled eggs	Soups, sauces, vegetables, salads, casseroles, pasta
Olive oil, flaxseed oil, trans-fat free margarine	Vegetables, potatoes, noodles, rice, smoothies	Dry milk powder, protein powder	Soups, gravy, scrambled eggs, dessert, mashed potatoes, hot cereal, shakes
Cream cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt	Fruit, bagels, crackers, bread	Leftover beans, grains, pasta, bread	Soups, stir-fries, casseroles, pasta, convenience foods
Milk or milk substitute	Soups, scrambled eggs, tea/coffee, mashed potatoes	Tofu, tempeh, and other meat substitutes	Soups, salads, stir-fries, casseroles, smoothies, desserts

SEE BACK SIDE FOR QUICK AND EASY MEAL SUGGESTIONS

QUICK-PREP MEALS:

- Canned soup - just add water and warm-up in the microwave or stove top. Add leftover beans or meats to add extra nutrition if you can.
- Salads - cut veggies, lettuce, add dressing and eat. Limit raw salads if you have a problem with diarrhea.
- Meat or veggie sandwich - combine meat and/or veggies with bread and condiments and eat
- Tuna melt - combine tuna, tomato, cheese with bread; butter outsides of bread and toast in skillet or under the broiler in your oven
- Salmon Pita Sandwich - open a 7 ounce can of salmon and drain, mix with 2 Tbsps. Miracle Whip, stuff into pita, add lettuce and tomato and eat. If you don't have Miracle Whip, use regular mayo or salad dressing
- Pizza Bagel - spread spaghetti sauce on bagel, top with cheese, and microwave
- Spaghetti - cook noodles, drain, return to pot, add sauce and eat. Add leftover meats or beans if you can for extra nutrition
- Bean Taco - warm a can of refried beans in microwave, fill taco shell or tortilla with warm beans, add some diced tomato, shredded lettuce, and cheese
- Quesadilla - place a flour tortilla on a plate, sprinkle with shredded cheese, microwave for 20 seconds, top with salsa, roll and eat. Add leftover beans or meat for added nutrition if you can.
- Black bean and corn salad - rinse and drain a 15 ounce can each of black beans and corn, put in a bowl with two cups of salsa and mix. Put on tortilla, or dip with chips and eat.

QUICK, EASY, AND NUTRITIOUS BREAKFASTS:

- Two whole-wheat toaster waffles topped with 1/2 cup of warm applesauce. Add peanut butter for extra calories and flavor
- Two slices of rye toast spread with 1 Tbsp. each of peanut butter and jelly or jam.
- One toasted whole-wheat English muffin with 2 Tbsps. of cottage cheese and a dab of apple butter or a canned pineapple ring.
- One low-fat corn or bran muffin and 6 ozs. of flavored yogurt.
- A bowl of enriched cereal with milk and topped with fruit.

To schedule a FREE visit with a Chicken Soup Brigade dietitian, call (206) 957-1600