Appetite Changes

What are appetite changes?
Two common changes you may notice are feeling less hungry and finding that some foods may taste different.

- Eat well to help your body stay strong.
- Let your doctor or nurse know if you lose weight.

Try these tips to make eating easier:

Set meal times and routines.
Eat a little, even if you’re not hungry.
- It may help to eat 5 or 6 small meals each day, instead of 3 large meals.
- Try new foods to keep up your interest in food.
- Eat with family or friends, or watch television while you eat.
- Choose foods that are high in calories or protein like those listed on the back of this sheet.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about seasonings that may help some foods taste better.
- If food tastes like metal, eat with plastic forks or spoons.

Be active.
Being active may help you feel more hungry.
- Take a short walk each day.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse about exercises that can help you.

Drink liquids.
Getting enough to drink is important, but don’t fill up on liquids during meals.
- Drink milkshakes or soups that are easy to swallow.
- Keep track of how much you eat and drink each day. Then talk with your doctor or nurse to make sure you are eating and drinking enough.
### Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects: Appetite Changes

**Keep this list on your refrigerator.**

**Eat more of these foods and drinks that are high in calories or protein.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soups</th>
<th>Drinks</th>
<th>Main meals and snacks</th>
<th>Sweets</th>
<th>Extras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Cream soups</td>
<td>• Some instant breakfast drinks</td>
<td>• Chicken</td>
<td>• Custard</td>
<td>• Butter, margarine, or oil added to foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Soups with lentils or beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or red)</td>
<td>• Milkshakes</td>
<td>• Lentils or beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or red)</td>
<td>• Ice cream</td>
<td>• Cottage cheese, cream cheese, and sour cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Milkshakes</td>
<td>• Eggs</td>
<td>• Muffins</td>
<td>• Some liquid meal replacements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fruit smoothies</td>
<td>• Fish</td>
<td>• Pudding</td>
<td>• Peanut butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Whole milk</td>
<td>• Nuts, seeds, and wheat germ</td>
<td>• Yogurt (plain or vanilla)</td>
<td>• Powdered milk added to foods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ask your doctor or nurse what foods and drinks are best for you.**

#### Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:
1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What foods should I eat?
3. Are there high-protein drinks or vitamins that can help me?
4. How much water, or other liquids, should I drink each day?
5. What exercises can help increase my appetite?

---

**How can we help?**

**National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service**

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: www.cancer.gov

Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at: www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects

---

Revised February 2012