

When food becomes difficult

This advice may not be suitable for some medical conditions .e.g. diabetes, food allergies

Loss of appetite is common due to illness, treatments or medication. Maintaining an interest in food and drinks can be a positive step to maintaining strength for other activities and general enjoyment.

Maintaining food enjoyment

Having a breakfast actually stimulates the appetite for the rest of the day. Having a breath of fresh air before meals and avoiding cooking smells can help. Keep eating areas well ventilated



Most people eat better in company.

Take time eating,
chew well and
have a rest after

Try to have frequent small meals and snacks, use smaller plates if easily put off.

Try to think about surroundings. Are they as pleasant as possible?



Drinking fluid just before a meal can 'fill up' the stomach leaving less room for food. Drink at the end of eating

Do not worry about eating any particular foods if it starts to taste unpleasant or different to normal, substitute for foods that retain a pleasant taste. Even if some meals end up being very different from the normal and even a bit strange!

Enhance the taste of meals by experimenting with herbs or spices e.g. coriander, rosemary, garlic, mild curry



Stress and eating

Food is an enjoyable and social part of life but this can diminish during illness.

The provision of food can often be an expression of caring and love, so can often become a source of conflict as family and carers can become anxious when food intake diminishes and weight loss is obvious. It is important that a reduction in food intake and other food difficulties do not become another stress at difficult times.

Make the best of good days and accept that at times little may be eaten. Doing your best is sometimes enough.

Needing more nourishment?

- Add extra butter/margarine to vegetables and potatoes. Frying food adds extra Kcal (energy) to the diet
- Be generous with butter, margarine, jams, marmalade chocolate spread etc.
- Add extra cream to soups, puddings or sauces or over fruit or desserts

Enriched milk

Mix 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder into 1 pint of full fat milk, use to make puddings, sauces, milky drinks such as coffee or cocoa.

Speak to the GP or nurse if:

- Nausea is a problem as there are tablets which may help. If the anti sickness tablets are not working then ask to try a different kind. One group of tablets work on the nausea centres in the brain and another group work on the gut so it may be beneficial try different ones
- Constipation is a problem, as it will increase or cause nausea and stop or diminish the ability to eat
- Diarrhoea is a problem and stopping a person eating
- Pain is not well controlled as any pain will diminish the enjoyment of food and eating may stop altogether



Sore mouth? - These foods may irritate your mouth
Very hot or very cold foods, salty, spicy or acidic foods such as pickles, curries, vinegar, lemon and orange may nip, coarse or dry foods e.g. crisps, nuts, muesli, crispbreads.

Soft, moist or liquidised foods may be easier to take, cold foods and drinks can be soothing. Mouth washes or sprays can be used before eating to sooth your mouth and make eating easier.

Remember to take any pain relief as recommended by your doctor or nursing staff.



Keep your mouth fresh and clean, clean your teeth with a soft toothbrush after eating

Feeling sick?

- Keep up fluids by having frequent sips of fluid such as mineral water, water or lemonade
- Try to eat little and often to maintain strength
- Avoid favourite foods at this time as they may become associated with the nausea
- Avoid fatty or fried foods as these can make nausea worse
- Cold or room temperature meals may help if food smells increase nausea
- Some people find ginger helpful e.g. ginger ale, stem ginger or ginger tea made by steeping a few slices of root ginger in hot water

Ready meals frozen or fresh are good standbys when cooking is difficult

Dry mouth?

Soft, moist or liquidised foods may be easier to swallow.

Keep your mouth moist by taking frequent sips of fluid, sucking ice cubes, sorbets, frozen yoghurts and ice lollies can also help.

Try sharp tasting foods e.g. lemon flavours, fruit pastilles or chewing gum to stimulate saliva production.

A coated tongue can be cleaned by unsweetened pineapple chunks (fresh is most effective) or juice if the mouth is not sore.

Use water to freshen your mouth or artificial saliva sprays, pastilles, gels and lip balms.

Keep your mouth fresh and clean, clean you teeth after eating with a soft toothbrush.



Milkshakes and smoothies

Mix up your own [in a blender if you have one, see recipe) using enriched milk along with any combination of fruit, ice-cream and full fat yoghurt; sweeten with extra sugar or honey. You'll find ready-made smoothies and milkshakes beside the fresh milk or long-life milk products in the shops.

Build Up & Complan are sold in chemists and supermarkets. Sweet and savoury flavours are available. Use them as a nourishing between meal snack, or occasionally to replace a meal.

High protein high energy milkshake

Mix, whisk or liquidise together

- ½ pint [300ml] full fat milk
- 4 dessertspoons [30ml] double cream
- 4 dessertspoons [20g] dried milk powder
- 4 dessertspoons [30ml] milkshake syrup [or to taste]

Try adding pureed fruit, ice cream, fresh cream, full fat yoghurt or honey for extra nutrition and flavour.

KEEP REFRIGERATED for a maximum of 24 hours



Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk
www.nhs24.com

Social services contact details:

Stirling 0845 277 7000 www.stirling.gov.uk

Falkirk 01324 506070 www.falkirk.gov.uk

Clackmannan 01259 450000 www.clacks.gov.uk