

kidney disease: Eating well with a small appetite

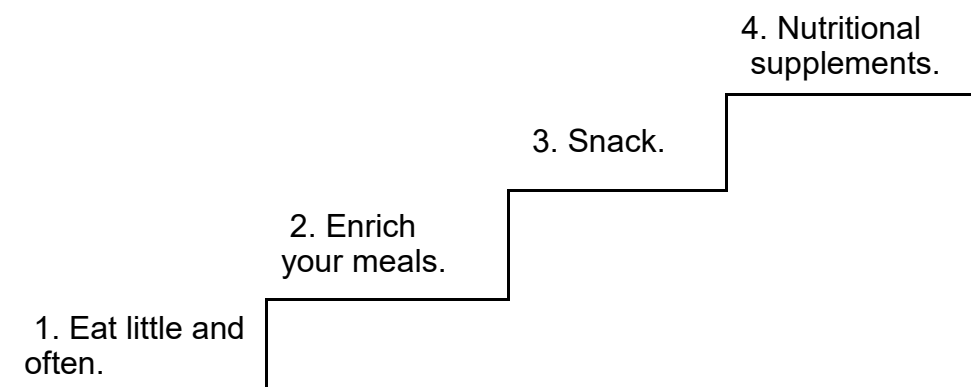
Renal Dietetics

Information for Patients

Produced: July 2022
Updated: December 2022
Review: July 2025
Leaflet number: 1315 Version: 1.1

Introduction

Having a reduced appetite can act as a major barrier to being able to eat as usual. You may find that some days you have no interest in food and are missing meals. However, even with a reduced appetite there are steps you can take to maximise your nutritional intake.



These steps are important to:

- prevent weight loss.
- reduce tiredness.
- aid wound healing.
- improve your ability to fight infections.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
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Step 1: Eat little and often

- Eat 3 small meals and 2 to 3 snacks every day.
- Try to include some foods which are high in protein. This includes meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, tofu and Quorn.
- Aim to have a pudding twice a day.
- If a large plate of food puts you off eating, use a smaller plate instead, such as a side plate, and have smaller portions.
- Keep a food diary. This is a good way to see how you are doing and can help spot where there is a gap to add a meal or snack.
- Avoid drinking before meals to prevent feeling full.
- If your appetite changes through the day, make the most of the times when your appetite is good. For example if your appetite is better in the mornings have a cooked breakfast.
- If you are feeling too unwell, tired or are unable to cook, you could try:
 - having quick convenience (pre-prepared) foods such as frozen meals, tinned foods and ready meals.
 - using a meal delivery service like Wiltshire Farm Foods or Oakhouse Foods, or other meal services such as Meals on Wheels that are local to you.
- If you are feeling sick (nauseous), avoid strong cooking smells if possible and try eating cold foods which may be easier to eat.
- When you are away from home, carry snacks to have on the go such as biscuits or cereal bars.
- Create an environment which helps you to eat. You may find it easier to eat while in a quiet relaxed atmosphere, while talking to someone, reading, listening to the radio or watching TV.

Step 2: Enrich your meals

This is a great way of adding energy to your meals without increasing the portion size.

<p>To breakfast cereals or porridge add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cream • syrup • honey or sugar 	<p>To potato and vegetables add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • butter or margarine • mayonnaise / salad cream • oil based dressings to salads • cream / creamy sauces
<p>To bread (sliced bread, chapatti, roti) add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • butter or margarine or ghee • jam / marmalade • honey / syrup • full fat cream cheese 	<p>To desserts add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cream – single, double, clotted • crème fraiche • jam • honey / syrup / sugar • ice-cream

The following foods can provide useful calories and protein to your diet. However, they may need to be limited if your potassium or phosphate levels tend to be high. This can be discussed with your dietitian:

- Full fat yoghurt/ Greek yoghurt.
- Grated cheese.
- Foods made from milk such as custard and rice pudding.

Choose full fat foods wherever possible (e.g. full fat milk and full fat yoghurts). These may be labelled 'luxury' or 'thick and creamy'. Avoid foods labelled 'light/ diet/ low fat'.

Step 3: Snack ideas

These foods will give you extra calories and protein, even if eaten in small amounts at a time. For example, keep a plate of small cut sandwiches in the fridge to eat throughout the day or cut up a piece of cake and have with your hot drinks. Circle your favourite foods in the table below. This can act as a helpful reminder of the foods you may be able to eat even when your appetite is at its lowest.

Sweet foods	Savoury foods
Plain sponge cake with custard or cream	Sandwiches made with ham, chicken, turkey, tinned tuna or egg.
Tinned fruit and cream	Toast with tinned spaghetti, cream cheese
Ice-cream	Egg – fried, scrambled, poached, boiled, omelette
Crème caramel	Rice cakes, corn based crisps, breadsticks with cream cheese
Mousse	Crackers with butter and cream cheese
Trifle	Plain biscuits
Flapjack	Plain cakes
Croissant/ toasted crumpet/ scone/ hot cross bun (add butter, jam, honey or cream)	Pitta/ roti/ naan/ bagel
Cheesecake	Meat/ vegetable samosa
Egg custard tart	Plain dosa
Jam tart	Meat/ fish patties
Fruit pie	Pies/ pastries/ quiche
	Sausage rolls
	Spring rolls

Step 4: Nutritional supplements

There are a range of nutritional supplements available which may help to increase your calorie and protein intake. If you are on a fluid restriction, nutritional supplement drinks will need to be included in your allowance. Try to have these as a supplement inbetween meals rather than to replace a meal.

Please ask to speak to the dietitian if you would like to discuss supplements further. If necessary a prescription can be arranged via your GP.

If you follow a low potassium or low phosphate diet, you may be able to relax these restrictions depending on your blood results. Discuss this with your renal dietitian/ renal team if you are unsure.

Some of the suggestions in this leaflet are not suitable for kidney patients with diabetes specifically the use of additional sugary and sweet foods. Please continue to monitor your blood glucose levels as a reduced food intake may cause your levels to be different from normal.

There are many factors that can impact on your appetite. If your appetite is related to low mood, please discuss with your GP. You may also find the following website helpful:

<https://www.kidneycareuk.org/get-support/counselling-and-support-service/>

Having a varied and balanced diet

When your appetite improves and you are no longer losing weight, you should try to make sure that you follow a varied and balanced diet by:

- **Having starchy energy-rich foods at each meal** such as bread, potatoes (once boiled), rice, pasta, cereal or chapatti.
- **Eating a good variety of fruit and vegetables** every day to help meet your daily vitamin and mineral targets. You may need to be careful with certain fruits and vegetables which are high in potassium. Your dietitian will be able to advise further on your requirements.

It is recommended that all patients with kidney problems avoid star fruit as it may cause harmful effects.

- **Including protein-rich foods in your meals at least twice a day.**

Whilst your appetite is low, you may be able to relax any usual potassium or phosphate restrictions. Please discuss with your dietitian.

If you're stuck for recipe ideas, visit the Kidney Kitchen section on the Kidney Care UK website for some new kidney friendly meal ideas: <https://www.kidneycareuk.org/about-kidney-health/living-kidney-disease/kidney-kitchen/>

Taste changes

Some people with kidney disease may experience changes to the way things taste. These are sometimes described as a loss of taste, reduced taste or taste disturbance such as having a bitter or unpleasant taste, “like cardboard” or “like metal”. This can have a big effect on appetite and enjoyment of food. Below are the most commonly reported taste changes and some tips to help manage them.

Dry mouth:

- Avoid salty foods as this increases your thirst.
- Stimulate saliva by sucking on chilled or frozen fruit slices (lemon, mandarin, apple, grapes).
- Keep your mouth clean with regular brushing. Use of antibacterial mouthwashes and toothpaste can help with a dry mouth and any bad breath.

Bitter taste:

- Avoid having items with bitter tastes, for example coffee, chocolate, beer and tonic water.
- Try adding sweet tastes in your diet (cook with honey), or add sugar to your tea/ coffee as sweet tastes counteract bitter tastes.
- Hard boiled sweets can be refreshing and leave a pleasant taste in the mouth.
- Try having acidic foods and drinks which get rid of bitter tastes with your meal/ snack (such as a small glass of lemon or carbonated drink).
- Note: bitter taste can cause nausea, vomiting and dry retching, therefore these symptoms can also be improved by following the tips above.

Metallic taste:

- Use plastic cutlery if you notice a metallic taste in your mouth.
- Try peppermint/ menthol chewing gum.
- Try a glass of ginger beer or carbonated water with meals.

Loss of taste:

- Enhance taste by adding herbs and spices such as chilli and pepper.
- Enhance taste by adding lemon, lime or vinegar, or having carbonated drinks.
- Marinate meats, chicken or fish before cooking with herbs, spices or lemon juice.
- Try to activate your sweet taste sensors by cooking main meals with added honey.

Lack of interest in meat:

Many people with kidney disease describe a loss of interest in meat. This may be caused by a loss of taste to savoury foods and may include other protein rich foods. If you are experiencing this you may be at risk of not getting enough protein in your diet. You may find it helpful to marinate your meat with herbs, spices or lemon juice, or try other sources of high protein foods listed in step 1.

Your personal plan

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Previous reference: LND5201

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