

Eating well with respiratory disease

Leicestershire Nutrition and

Dietetic Service

Information for Patients

Produced: June 2024

Review: June 2027

Leaflet number: 1511 Version: 1

Why is eating well important?

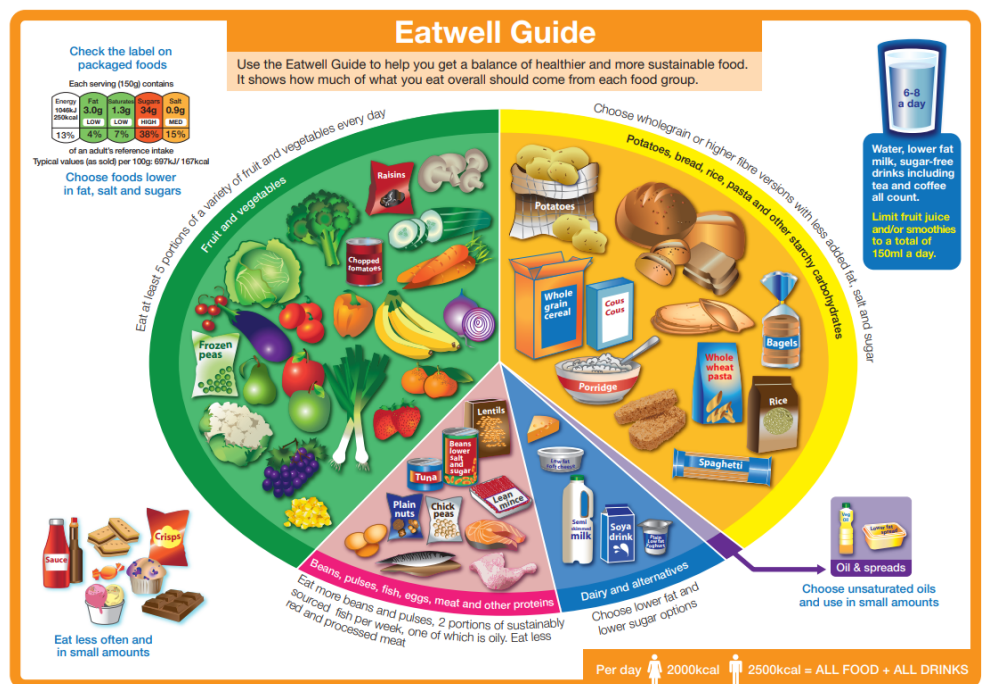
A nutritionally balanced and varied diet is very important to help you keep a healthy body weight. You should aim for a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) of 20 to 25 kg/m². Ask your health care professional to help you work out your BMI or use the [NHS online calculator](#). It is very important when you have a lung condition. Food and fluids contain essential nutrients to help keep your lungs healthy.

You may be surprised to learn that breathing increases the amount of energy your body needs. Food is the energy source used by your body for all of its activities such as breathing. A balanced and varied diet can help reduce your risk of infection. It help your body fight back against infections if you become unwell.

Healthy eating

Good nutrition can

- improve your quality of life,
- help control your symptoms
- promote an active lifestyle.



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
 To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

There are 5 key food groups. Each group helps keep you and your lungs healthy:

1. Fruits and vegetables have vitamins and minerals. These boost your immune system to help you fight off chest infections. Eat at least 5 different portions of fruits and vegetables every day.
2. Starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes, bread, chapatti, breakfast cereals, rice, and pasta give us energy for breathing and activity. Choosing wholegrain options which are higher in fibre, such as wholemeal bread, brown rice or pasta will make you feel fuller for longer and help you go to the toilet. Add a portion of these at every meal.
3. Protein sources such as beans and pulses, nuts, fish, eggs and meat are very important to keep your muscles strong, such as your chest muscles. These help your ribs expand as you breathe. A protein rich diet also helps to boost your immune system. Have 2 to 3 portions a day.
4. Dairy choices such as milk and cheese are a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals, especially calcium for healthy bones. (Make sure non-dairy alternatives are fortified with vitamins and minerals). Have 2 to 3 portions a day
5. Oil and spreads are also important to help you process your food especially vitamins. Choose unsaturated oils (such as. olive or rapeseed oil). Use in small amounts.

Eating with shortness of breath

You may be having problems breathing and eating at the same time. Try the following ideas to help you with eating more:

- Eat little portions more often. Aim for 3 to 4 smaller meals and 2 to 3 snacks every day. Softer moist foods are easier to chew than dry foods
- Sometimes drinks can be easier than food, especially if you have a dry mouth. Choose high calorie and protein drinks such as milk, milkshakes, fruit juice/ smoothies and hot chocolate made with full fat milk (blue top). If you are having a meal, try not to drink before, so you do not feel full.
- Eat in a calm, quiet environment, sit upright and take your time
- Make meals and snacks energy and protein dense. This will help get more goodness with less food (see food fortification section for ideas)
- If you have a dry mouth think about stopping smoking. Try sucking boiled sweets and chewing gum. Make sure you are brushing your teeth and dentures regularly. Stronger flavoured food such as citrus/spicy/sweet foods can be used to trigger saliva. They can help if your sense of taste has changed. Artificial saliva can be prescribed if you have problems. Speak to your nurse or doctor.
- Powdered nutritional supplements made up with milk can be bought from most supermarkets and pharmacies. They can be taken between meals (for example, Complan).
- Make the most of when you feel hungry and eat foods you enjoy.

How much should I drink?

It is important to drink plenty of fluids. Aim to drink at least 8 cups of non-alcoholic fluids a day. This can include water, tea, coffee, milk, squash and juice. Limit your alcohol intake as it causes dehydration. If you feel too full to drink fluids with meals, try having a small amount with meals and drink 1 hour after eating.

Food fortification

A way to increase the amount of energy (calories) and protein in your diet is to fortify meals, drinks and snacks you are already eating. This should not increase the amount of food. Examples are:

- Fortified milk. Add 2 to 4 tablespoons of milk powder to 1 pint of full fat milk. Use it during the day. (In cereals, tea/coffee/Horlicks/Ovaltine, milkshakes, lassi, sauces and soup)
- Add full fat cheese, cream, butter, ghee, Greek yoghurt, ground almonds, cream cheese and margarine to meals and sauces
- Add sugar, honey, jam and peanut butter into drinks, puddings and on cereal
- Add syrup, cream, ice-cream and evaporated milk to fruit
- Add oil to roast potatoes, salads, meat and fish
- Add more butter or margarine in sandwiches. Add condiments such as mayonnaise, salad cream or ketchup.
- Include foods that are high in protein such as meat, dairy, eggs, fish, beans and nuts at every meal/snack
- Vegan alternatives can be used to fortify meals for example, vegan cheese, dairy-free spread, oat/soya cream and yoghurt and vegan protein powder.

Micronutrients

A varied and balanced diet high in fruit and vegetables, and omega-3 fats (from oily fish or vegan sources including chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds and walnuts) should provide enough vitamins and minerals for most people. Research suggests that getting these nutrients from food sources makes them better than taking them in an added supplement form, for example, from tablets. The exception to this is vitamin D and iron, which may need supplementing as per your doctors advice, if your levels are low.

Quick and easy ideas

- Avoid 'low fat', 'diet' or 'low calorie' foods as they will not give you as much energy
- Prepare meals in advance and store in the fridge or freezer. Tinned and frozen fruit and vegetables are as good as fresh fruit and vegetables and are easier to prepare
- Think about buying ready meals or a food delivery service such as Wiltshire Farm Foods or Oakhouse Foods. Ask someone to help with your shopping and cooking. The Royal Voluntary Service can also help with shopping and can be contacted on 0808 196 3646
- Tinned/ powdered desserts are a quick snack. They can be paired with ready-made custard, for example, microwave sponge, angel delight or tinned fruit
- Use packet mixes to speed up cooking or pre-prepared tinned food such as chick peas, meat in sauce, Bombay potatoes.
- Have a choice of snacks available that are easy to reach. For example, a biscuit tin where you usually sit, yoghurts in the fridge or a box for your favourite snacks
- Use a smaller plate so you do not feel overwhelmed by the portion size. Have second helpings if you can manage.

Eating well in hospital

- Ask for a copy of the menu so you can look through it at your own pace. Choose a meal that you would like. Order a starter, main meal and dessert. It does not matter if you cannot finish everything. It is important that the food is there for you to try. Focus on high calorie main meals rather than soup which is lower in calories and will fill you up. If you need help eating, ask for a 'red tray' so the ward staff are aware they need to help you
- Ask for Aymes milkshakes and milk to drink, as these are high in energy and protein
- Try to have 2 to 3 snacks a day from the drinks trolley. You can ask for more snacks such as full fat yoghurts, cheese, rice pudding and custard pots which are kept in the fridge. Ask for extra butter to add into your main meals

Taking supplement drinks

- You may have been prescribed oral nutritional supplement (ONS) drinks by your doctor or dietitian. These are to help increase the amount of energy and protein in your diet, and to help you maintain or gain weight.
- These drinks are usually like milkshakes, but there are other options such as juice style drinks, and compact (smaller) drinks. Ask to speak to the dietitian if you would like to try something different. They usually taste better when they are cold. If you are short of breath or diabetic, sip these drinks slowly so they are more manageable, and will have a smaller effect on your blood sugar levels
- Evidence shows that the benefits of ONS are usually seen in 2 to 3 months and that between 300 to 900kcal a day (average 2 bottles) is best.

More information

If you are concerned about your diet or your weight, please ask to be referred to a dietitian either through your GP/specialist nurse or ward staff if you are in hospital. If you have been given advice before from a health care professional to follow a specialised diet you should carry on with this. If you are not sure, please speak to your dietitian, doctor or nurse.

In times of crisis Trussell Trust Foodbanks can be accessed for emergency food parcels. Vouchers can be given by doctors, health visitors, social workers and Citizens Advice who can be contacted on 0808 208 2138. Local foodbanks can be found through the Trussell Trust website.

Visit the British Lung Foundation website www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/ for more information about lung diseases and eating well for healthier lungs.

Online NHS resources are available for more information on living with specific respiratory conditions.

Contact details

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your dietitian

Telephone Number.....



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk