Keeping Your Diet Healthy

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you may have little appetite or feel too tired to prepare and eat meals. But eating regularly and eating healthy foods is important because food:

• Provides your body with the energy it needs to function, such as for breathing and digestion.
• Provides you with the energy you need for daily activities.
• Helps strengthen your body’s natural defense system (immune system), making it easier to avoid infections.

You can take simple steps to be sure you eat healthy foods on a regular basis. But because people with COPD often have other health problems that may restrict the foods they can eat, always talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian before making changes in your diet.

Tips for Eating With COPD

People with COPD often have trouble preparing foods and eating. The following tips can make eating easier and help you get necessary nutrition. But if you have other health problems that may restrict the foods you can eat, talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian before making changes in your diet.

Make Eating Easier

• Choose foods that are easy to prepare.
• Eat in a relaxed atmosphere.
• Eat with friends and family.
• If you eat a main meal, try to eat it early. This way, you will have energy throughout more of the day.
• Try to include a favorite food in your meals.

Avoid Shortness of Breath While Eating

• Stop smoking. It is never too late to quit smoking. No matter how long you have had COPD or how serious it is, quitting smoking will help slow the disease and improve your quality of life.
• Use medicines that make breathing easier and/or clear your airways about one hour before eating.
• Rest before eating if eating makes you short of breath or tired.
• Clear your lungs beforehand. Use your bronchodilator medicine before you eat. This can help you breathe better during your meal.
• Eat while sitting up. This helps remove pressure on your lungs.
• If you use oxygen, use it while eating. Eating and digestion require energy, which causes your body to use more oxygen.

• Eat six small meals each day instead of three large ones so that your stomach is never extremely full. A full stomach can interfere with breathing by pushing on the diaphragm.
• Drink your beverage at the end of the meal. Drinking before or during the meal can fill you up more quickly.
• Avoid or eat only small amounts of gas-forming foods (they bloat the abdomen and make breathing difficult). These include onions, cauliflower, broccoli, melons, peas, corn, cucumbers, cabbage, brussels sprouts, turnips, raw apples, and beans (except green beans). Fried and greasy foods can also cause gas or bloating.
• Eat and chew slowly so you are less likely to become short of breath. Try putting your spoon or fork down between bites to slow your eating speed.
• If you have a hard time breathing in the morning, do not skip breakfast. Have a liquid nutritional drink (such as Ensure) instead.

Eat Healthy Foods

• Eat a varied diet. Eat fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cereal and grains, and meats.
• Avoid foods that are difficult to chew.
• Don’t waste energy consuming foods with little nutritional value, such as potato chips, candy bars, and soft drinks.

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Using Exercise to Feel Better

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) often makes it difficult to breathe, which in turn may limit how active you are and how much you exercise. But it is important to remain active and exercise when you have COPD. Activity and exercise can:

• Build muscle strength and endurance. This will help you be more active—you will be able to do more activities for longer amounts of time.
• Reduce shortness of breath.

Exercises for COPD can be done nearly anywhere. They are often done as part of a pulmonary rehabilitation program.

Always consult with your doctor before starting an exercise program. Heart problems, such as coronary artery disease (CAD) or high blood pressure, are common in people who have COPD and may limit exercise options. You may need medical supervision when you start your program.

How do I exercise for COPD?

Exercises for COPD are simple to do and take little time. They generally consist of aerobic exercises, which increase oxygen flow to your muscles, and upper and lower body exercises, which strengthen muscles.

If you become breathless while doing any of the exercises, rest in a position with your shoulders supported (such as in a chair) and wait until you can breathe easily again.

To get started with an exercise program:

• Talk to your doctor. He or she may ask that you do specific exercises and will help you figure out not only how often and how long to do your exercises but also how to set your long-term exercise program goals. Although it may take weeks before you are able to reach your goals, how long it takes is not as important as doing the exercises consistently.
• Start slowly and gradually. For each exercise, either time how long you can do it or count the number of times you can do it before you are mildly out of breath. Then rest and move on to the next exercise. Each week, increase the time you spend doing each exercise or how many times you do each one.
• Pick activities that you enjoy.
• Always have a warm-up and cool-down. This is a good time for stretches.
• Pay attention to your breathing. Try to breathe slowly to save your breath. Breathe in through your nose, keeping your mouth closed. This warms and moisturizes the air you breathe. Breathe out through pursed lips.

Contact Us
For more information, call 1-866-942-7966
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Reduce Your Risk of the Flu and Pneumonia

It is important to get vaccinated against the flu and pneumonia. Many pneumonia-related deaths are preventable through vaccination and appropriate treatment. Pneumonia is a lung infection that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Signs of it include: coughing, fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing or shortness of breath, chills, or chest pain.

Certain people are more likely to become ill with pneumonia:
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Children younger than five years of age
- People under the age of 65 who have underlying medical conditions (like diabetes or HIV/AIDS)
- People ages 19–64 who smoke cigarettes or have asthma

Get vaccinated. In the United States, several vaccines prevent infections that can cause pneumonia, including Pneumococcal, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), Pertussis (whooping cough) and seasonal influenza (flu) vaccines. Talk to your health care provider for more information on these vaccines.

There are several strategies for preventing pneumonia and other respiratory infections such as colds and the flu:
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Clean hard surfaces that are touched often (like doorknobs and countertops).
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, your elbow, or sleeve.
- Limit your exposure to cigarette smoke.
- Take steps to treat, control and prevent conditions like diabetes and HIV/AIDS.