

Common issues with eating and drinking

Information for patients, relatives and carers



Lots of different conditions can have an impact on your ability to eat and drink. You may feel full very quickly or you may experience side effects such as nausea, having a dry/ sore mouth or notice taste changes. All these symptoms can cause a reduced appetite and weight loss. If these are experienced for a prolonged period, this can impact on your physical and mental health. You can find in this booklet a handful of tips which may help with these symptoms.

Feeling sick

Certain medications and treatments, changes in health conditions or a reduced fluid intake can cause nausea or vomiting.

Tips for dealing with nausea:

- Try to eat little and often i.e. 3 small meals and 3 snacks each day
- Cold food may be tolerated better than hot
- If meals are not achievable, aim for snacks every 1-2 hours
- If you are struggling with cooked meals, you might find dry foods are more manageable e.g. crackers, toast, biscuits, cubes of cheese or sandwiches
- Avoid 'greasy'- foods that are cooked in oil and fats- deep fried/fatty foods or those with a strong smell
- Have drinks before and/or after foods instead of with food but remember you need to keep yourself well hydrated. Try to have 6-8 cups of fluid every day
- Small, frequent sips of fluid
- Try to avoid laying down after a meal
- Your doctor may prescribe medication to help.

For more information visit

<https://malnutritionandfoodfirst.rdash.nhs.uk/oral-nutrition/>

Sore/ Dry Mouth or Throat

Symptoms can be varied such as redness and pain, burning or tingling sensation (sore) and dryness, stickiness in your mouth, difficulty chewing, sore throat and hoarseness. A sore mouth can occur as a side-effect of certain medications/ treatments. A dry mouth can also be an issue, particularly when there are difficulties swallowing. The lining of your throat may become red, inflamed, and ulcerated, making eating and swallowing difficult.

Tips for a sore/ dry mouth or throat:

- If possible, avoid very dry foods such as toasts and biscuits
- Sip fluids throughout the day to help with saliva levels
- Use ice lollies
- Have drinks before and/ or after foods instead of with foods but remember you need to keep well hydrated
- Drink plenty of fluid – try to aim for 6-8 cups each day
- Choose nourishing drinks such as fortified milk shakes or fruit smoothies
- Certain temperatures might be better to avoid very cold or hot drinks
- Try foods with a higher fluid content e.g. watermelon, melon, broth or soups, yoghurt drinks, cucumber, tomatoes, watercress, apples, celery, lettuce and peaches
- Choose foods with softer textures, which are easier to eat and swallow.

It might help if you avoid spicy (could be chilli peppers, garlic and spices such as cumin, turmeric, ginger and mustard) salty (e.g. would be processed foods and meats, salted nuts and crisps, foods cooked in salt, gravy granules and stock cubes) or savoury/ acidic foods and go for plain foods

- Try to make food as attractive as possible, use different colours or make a nice place setting and give yourself plenty of time to eat
- Smoking and alcohol may irritate your dry or sore mouth so avoid if possible
- Use artificial saliva if needed and pain control as advised by your healthcare team.

How to care for dry mouth

- To moisten the mouth, a small headed toothbrush can be dipped in water and placed in the mouth
- Twice daily teeth and tongue brushing with a small headed brush and smear of toothpaste is important
- Use a non-foaming toothpaste e.g. Oralieve, OraNurse or BioXtra if you have swallowing problems or a dry mouth
- Dry mouth gel or sprays e.g. Oralieve mouth gel or BioXtra mouth gel can be used to make the mouth feel more comfortable. Gels can be applied with a gloved finger, a toothbrush or mouth Eze. Apply a pea sized amount to the tongue and cheeks, massaging it in to prevent a build-up of the gel
- Be aware oral thrush (candida). Symptoms include a white coating to the tongue and inside of the mouth, soreness and an unpleasant taste. Seek advice from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you think this is present
- More information can be found at www.dentalhealth.org/

Taste and smell changes

You may experience a loss of smell or taste changes e.g., metallic/ bitter taste in your mouth. These symptoms will have a significant impact of our food intake as a big part of our taste perception.

Tips for dealing with taste changes/ loss of taste:

- Keep your mouth clean and fresh before and after meals
- Try to clean your tongue to reduce 'coating', use a soft toothbrush
- Look out for signs of oral thrush and seek advice if this occurs
- Experiment with different flavours and textures that you may not previously have enjoyed
- You may find that cold food e.g., ice-cream, sorbet, yoghurt and drinks are more manageable
- Use different herbs or spices in cooking as this may improve taste e.g., garlic, onions, ginger, coriander, basil, lime or lemon juice, vinegar, or chilli. Be aware if you also have a sore mouth as spicy or acidic foods may make discomfort worse
- Readymade sauces can help to improve flavour e.g., BBQ sauce, apple sauce, mint sauce, olive pesto, chutney or salad dressings
- If you do not like tea or coffee, try fruit teas, fruit juice, cordial, Bovril, Lucozade or hot chocolate.

Certain fruit juices may interfere with some medication and treatment. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure.

Additional symptoms/ anxiety

When you are struggling to eat it may be helpful asking for support from family or from health care services which might help with your current situation.

Please see some tips below:

- Be positive about what you can manage now, every extra mouthful helps
- Make the most of good times of the day when your eating is better. Eat when you feel hungry or if you think you could manage something, even if it is not a mealtime
- Choose your favourite foods
- Make the most of good days when your eating is better and try to eat more on these days to make up for those days where your eating isn't as good
- Encourage a nourishing drink if food intake is low
- Eating with family or friends may be helpful and supportive
- Encourage eating first, drinking immediately before or during a meal can lead to feeling fuller much sooner
- Try to relax and eat slowly in comfortable surroundings with no distractions
- Take a walk to get fresh air, this may stimulate your mood, appetite, and aid digestion
- For further information please visit www.mind.org.uk

If you are suffering more than one of the symptoms mentioned above, you may need advice which is more personalised and/ or require onward referral to an appropriate healthcare service. Therefore, if so, please speak to your GP or healthcare professional.

Getting help:

If you notice a reduction in appetite or weight, or that of an individual you support or care for, please contact your local dietetic team for advice/ referral information:

Doncaster Dietetic Service

Telephone: 01302 796410

Email: rdash.dietetics@nhs.net

Twitter: @rdash_dietetics

Instagram: @doncasterdieteticservices

If you notice you are struggling to swallow, or that of an individual you support or care for, please contact your GP or local speech and language therapy team for advice/ referral information:

Doncaster Speech and Language Therapy Service

Telephone: 01302 796336

Note: If you have any allergies to the above suggestions, please do not follow the suggestions and seek advice from your healthcare professional where required.

For further information on topics discussed in this leaflet please visit:

<https://malnutritionandfoodfirst.rdash.nhs.uk/oral-nutrition/>

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If you would like this in large print, braille or on audiotape or would like this document in an alternative language, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0800 015 4334.

Amharic

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Arabic

إذا أردت الحصول على هذه الوثيقة بالخط الكبير أو بلغة برايل أو على هيئة شريط صوتي أو مترجمة إلى لغة بنظرة فبرجى الاتصال بخدمة التنسيق ونصيحة المريض Patient Advice and Liaison Service على رقم الهاتف 0800 015 4334 .

Bengali

আপনি যদি এটা বড় অক্ষরের ছাপায়, ব্রেইল-এ, বা কানে শোনার টেইপ-এ পেতে চান অথবা আপনি যদি এই কাগজটা অন্য কোন ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে 0800 015 4334 নম্বরে পেশেন্ট এ্যাড্‌ভাইস এন্ড লিয়েজঁ সার্ভিসের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Cantonese (traditional Chinese)

如果你希望本文件是采用大字印刷、盲文或录音磁带等格式，或者希望本文件是使用其它的语言，请联络病惠建议与联络服务 (Patient Advice and Liaison Service)，电话号码：0800 015 4334。

Czech

Pokud byste chtěli dokument psaný většími písmeny, brailovým písmem nebo na zvukové kazetě nebo v jiném jazyku, prosím, kontaktujte poradenskou službu pacientům na tel. 0800 015 4334.

Farsi

در صورت تمایل به داشتن این سند به نسخه ای با چاپ درشت تر، به خط بریل یا نسخه صوتی، و یا به زبانی دیگر، لطفاً با دفتر خدمات مشاوره و هماهنگی بیماران به شماره تلفن ۰۸۰۰۰۱۵۴۳۳۴ تماس حاصل نمایید.

French

Si vous désirez ce document en gros caractères, en braille, enregistré sur cassette audio ou dans une autre langue, veuillez contacter le service de conseils et liaison des patients [Patients Advice and Liaison Service] au 0800 015 4334.

Kurdish Sorani

ههنگه ئه زانیاریانه به چایی گهواره، برائیل یان لاسه شریتی دهنگی دهنجوازیت باخود ئه به لاسه ئهنگه به دهنجوازیت، تکلێه پاموئندی بکه به خزمهتگوزاری زینماهی و هاوناهاهنگی نهخوشامه به ژماره 0800 015 4334.

Polish

Jeżeli dokument wymagany jest w wersji drukowanej dużą czcionką lub alfabetem Braille'a, na kasecie audio lub w innym języku, prosimy o kontakt z zespołem ds. kontaktów z pacjentami (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) pod numerem telefonu 0800 015 4334.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਨਾ ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਟੇਪ ਤੇ ਚੱਟੋਟੇ ਹੋ ਜਾਂ ਇਸ ਸਮਰਾਥਨ ਨੂੰ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚੱਟੋਟੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਮਰੀਜ਼ ਸਲਾਹ ਅਤੇ ਸਲਾਹ-ਮੇਲ ਸੇਵਾ (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) ਨਾਲ 0800 015 4334 ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Somali

Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd in aad kan ku hesho far waaweyn, farta braille ee dadka indhaha la' ama cajalad dhegeysi ah ama haddii aad jeclaan lahayd in aad dukumeentigan ku hesho luqad kale, fadlan Adeegga Talobixinta iyo Xiriirinta ee Bukaanleyda (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) kala soo xiriir lambarka 0800 015 4334.

Turkish

Bu belgeyi büyük yazı, braille (kör alfabesi) veya ses kayıdı olarak veya başka bir dilde almak istiyorsanız, lütfen 0800 015 4334 no.lu telefondan Hasta Danışmanlık ve İrtibat Hizmetleri ile bağlantıya geçiniz.

Urdu

اگر آپ یہ بڑی چھپائی، بریل میں یا صوتی ٹیپ کے حامل کرنا چاہیں یا یہ دستاویز کسی قابل زبان میں چاہیں تو برائے کرم پیشاپیش ایڈوائس اینڈ لیاژن سروس سے رابطہ کریں۔ 0800 015 4334

Vietnamese

Nếu muốn có tài liệu này dưới dạng in chữ cỡ lớn hơn, chữ nổi braille hay bằng ghi âm, hoặc bằng một ngôn ngữ khác, xin quý vị liên hệ bộ phận Dịch vụ Tư vấn và Liên lạc với Bệnh nhân theo số 0800 015 4334.

This information is correct at the time of publishing
Last Reviewed: February 2022