
Poor Appetite

Loss of appetite is a very common side effect of chemotherapy, radiation, and cancer itself. Side effects of treatments such as loss of taste and smell, fatigue, nausea, and stress may also lead to decreased appetite.

It is very important to try to eat well during treatment. Your body needs calories and protein to help keep your weight and energy up. Maintaining strength can also make your treatments easier to tolerate.

What to do if you have a poor appetite:

- Eat small meals more often. Try to eat a small amount every 2-3 hours.
- Have meals that are easy to prepare such as sandwiches or ready-to-eat items.
- Have snacks on hand and close by during the day such as peanut butter and crackers, granola bars, ice cream, pudding, hard-boiled eggs, nuts, and fruit.
- Try to make eating enjoyable! Choose favorite foods, go out to a favorite restaurant, play music, or eat outside in the sunshine.
- Avoid drinking liquids with meals, unless they are needed for dry mouth or other swallowing problems.
- Increase activity. Taking a walk in the fresh air can help improve appetite.
- Use seasonings to enhance flavor, if tolerated.
- Choose items that are room temperature or cold to reduce the smell of foods.
- If you do not feel like you can eat solid food, consider sipping on nutritional supplements, soups, juices, and other liquids that provide a source of calories and nutrition.
- Try to eat larger meals when you feel the best. Often, people feel better earlier in the day or after a nap when they are rested.
- Make every bite count by choosing items high in calories and protein.