
Nutrition for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

Good nutrition helps to slow down the breakdown of muscle, keep the immune system strong, fight fatigue and infection, and improve sense of well-being and quality of life.

Eat a well-balanced diet to help you get all of the nutrients that your body needs.

Select a variety of foods from each food group, including whole grains, fruits & vegetables, milk/dairy, meat/beans and fats/oils.

Adequate calories are needed to prevent muscle loss.

If you begin to lose weight, address the problem early on. It may be hard to eat more food, so increase the number of calories in the foods you do eat.

To increase calories:

- Eat every 3-4 hours.
- Add margarine, butter, canola or olive oil to rice, potatoes, soups, breads, casseroles, and vegetables.
- Put jelly, jam, honey, or peanut butter on toast or crackers.
- Add an instant breakfast mix to your milk, yogurt, or milk shakes.
- Try a nutritional supplement such as Boost® or Ensure®.

Foods high in protein provide the building blocks for muscle.

Tips to add protein to your diet:

- Add meats, poultry, fish, milk, cheese, and eggs to soups, casseroles, and potato dishes.
- Mix dry milk powder into milk, soup, casseroles, custard and pudding.



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Drink enough fluids.

Adequate fluid intake is needed to prevent dehydration, avoid constipation and keep saliva and mucous thin. Aim for 8 cups of fluids a day.

Common signs and symptoms of dehydration include:

Dark colored urine	Decreased urine output	Dry skin	Headache
Dry or sticky mouth	Fatigue	Dizziness	Confusion

Constipation

Constipation is common in ALS because of weak abdominal muscles, inactivity, not drinking enough fluid and not eating enough fiber.

To avoid constipation:

- Drink 8 cups of fluid daily.
- Be as active as possible.
- Eat prunes or drink prune juice.
- If you are drinking a nutritional supplement, make sure it has added fiber.
- Eat high fiber foods such as whole grain cereals and breads, beans, nuts, and fruits and vegetables.
- Ask your physician about taking a laxative or a stool softener.

Difficulty eating or swallowing

Feeding yourself may become hard. Ask your Occupational Therapist about adaptive silverware, cups and plates cups.

If you have chewing or swallowing problems ask to see a Speech Pathologist for a swallowing assessment.

Tips for safer swallowing:

- Concentrate on swallowing.
- Eat slowly, take small bites, and chew your food well.

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- Avoid dry, hard, sticky, fibrous foods, and those with skins and seeds.
 - Avoid very sweet or very sour foods that stimulate saliva production.
 - Always sit in an upright position when eating and about 30 minutes after eating.
 - You may need to modify the textures of your food and/or consistency of your beverages.

Consider a feeding tube

Talk to your provider about options for nutritional support. Some patients choose to use a feeding tube. Consider a feeding tube if:

- maintaining your weight is difficult or you are losing weight
- eating and swallowing foods, liquids or medications is too exhausting, time consuming, painful or dangerous

You can keep eating by mouth even with a feeding tube as long as you are able to swallow safely.

You will not have to limit daily activities such as bathing or leaving the house.

It is important to have the tube placed before respiratory problems develop even if your swallowing is fine. The risk of placing the feeding tube increases as breathing function declines.