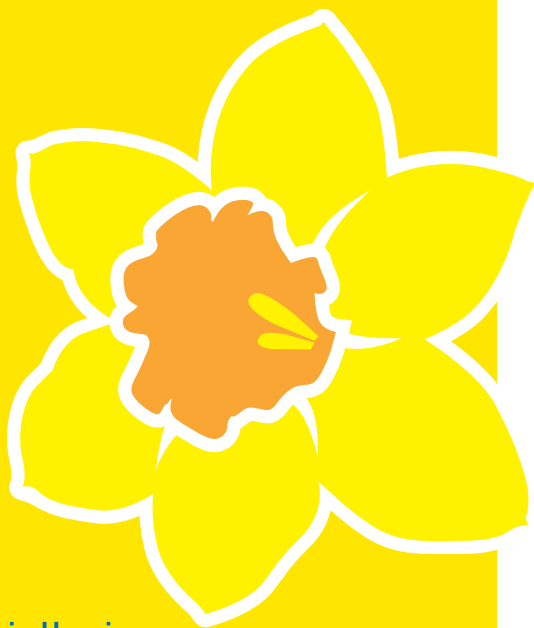


Patient and carer information

# Loss of appetite



Marie Curie Hospice



Marie Curie  
Cancer Care



Loss of appetite is very common and may result from your disease, its treatment or your medication. If left untreated it can lead to weight loss.

A number of factors can cause you to lose your appetite. For example, changes in the taste buds on your tongue can make food taste different. Changes in your stomach can also make you feel full after eating only small amounts of food. Nausea, retching or gagging, or other swallowing problems can also affect your appetite.

It is important to have the right balance of foods to get the nutrients and energy you need for your body to function properly.

## How can I improve my appetite?

The following tips may help to stimulate your appetite and encourage you to eat more:

- Eat little and often, especially if you cannot manage to eat a whole meal.
- Large portions can be off-putting so try smaller portions nicely arranged on your plate.
- Try eating breakfast when you wake in the morning; this is often when your appetite is at its best.
- Try to tempt your taste buds with new types of foods.
- Have a small glass of sherry or brandy half an hour before a meal to stimulate your appetite.\*
- A glass of wine with your meal can aid digestion and make your meal more enjoyable.\*
- Have a supply of snacks handy to nibble on.

\* Check with your doctor before taking alcohol if you are on medications.

- If the smell of hot food makes you feel sick, consider eating cold meals that do not need to be cooked.
- Do not rush meals and try to rest after eating.
- A little exercise, such as walking outdoors, before meals may help stimulate your appetite.

## Should I worry about healthy eating?

While you are experiencing a loss of appetite, it is important for you to eat as healthily as you can. The Food Standards Agency describes a healthy diet as one containing fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, such as wholegrain bread, pasta and rice, and a diet low in fat (especially saturated fat), salt and sugar.

## What should I do if I cannot face solid foods?

You can get nourishment from fluids and soft foods such as:

- full fat milk, which can be flavoured to suit your taste
- full fat yoghurt and milk puddings
- ice cream - this can also be put in drinks or milk puddings and served with fruit puree
- soups, which you can liquidise to remove any lumps
- commercial supplements such as Complan® or Ensure®

## What should I do if I am losing weight and have problems eating or drinking?

If you are concerned about your appetite or the amount of food you are eating, ask for advice from your nurse or doctor. Your doctor may need to review your general condition as well as any medications you are taking. Your doctor may also suggest you see a dietitian for specialist advice on diet and nutrition.

For links to websites about cancer care, information and support, visit our website:

[www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers)

## Support us

The services Marie Curie Cancer Care provides are always free to patients and families but we can only continue to do this through the generosity of our supporters. There are many ways to make a difference:

- make a donation
- leave a legacy in your will
- take part in a fundraising event
- volunteer your time for a wide range of activities
- sponsor a Light to Remember
- become a corporate partner

To find out more, phone: **0800 716 146**, visit our website: [www.mariecurie.org.uk](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk) or talk to the **hospice fundraiser**.

Your local Marie Curie Hospice actively promotes quality of life for people with cancer and other illnesses and provides support for their families, completely free.

[www.mariecurie.org.uk](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk)



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