

COPD and Nutrition

When you have COPD, what you eat and drink can make a big difference in how you feel.

A very common condition for people with COPD is to not get enough energy from the foods you eat.

This can result in not wanting to eat because you are tired or short of breath.

"My breathing is just horrible." – Michael, Patient

Or you might not be getting enough energy because the foods you do eat aren't providing enough energy.

In either case you aren't getting enough energy, your body begins using stored energy, which can lead to unhealthy and even dangerous weight loss.

Another common condition that can affect how you feel with COPD is being overweight.

Being overweight can make breathing more difficult because your lungs need to work harder.

In all cases getting the right amount of energy from the foods you eat depends on what you eat, and how you eat.

Here, we are going to go over the steps you can take to get the energy you need while avoiding breathing difficulties while you eat.

When you eat the right types of food, it gives you the energy you need to breathe.

Healthy eating will also help you to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

And good nutrition also helps you fight off infections, a main complication of COPD.

So, what should you eat when you have COPD?

Eat more high fiber foods. This includes whole wheat breads and pastas, fruits and vegetables, and oats.

Talk to your healthcare provider to help identify foods for you to choose or avoid.

Some high fiber foods such as cabbage and beans can cause gas and bloating for some people.

Other foods such as carbonated beverages and greasy fried foods can also lead to bloating and aren't nutritious.

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Gas and bloating makes breathing more difficult so avoid these foods.

Next, limit the amount of sodium or salt you eat per day since salt makes your body retain water, which can make it even harder to breathe.

Canned foods and highly processed pre-packaged foods usually have a lot of sodium.

To find out how much salt a food contains, read the food label. Pick foods with less than 300mg of sodium per serving.

Don't add salt to your foods when cooking, or at the table.

Healthy eating also helps you avoid other health problems. This includes helping you gain weight if you are underweight and lose weight if you are overweight.

In addition to healthy eating you should drink plenty of water throughout the day.

It helps keep any mucus in your lungs thin and easy to cough up.

Try to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water per day.

And limit or avoid caffeinated drinks like tea, coffee, and soda. These could interfere with your medications.

Since breathing difficulties may sometimes be due to fatigue, try to conserve energy around meal times.

Large meals can produce lots of carbon dioxide, which can interfere with breathing.

So eat five or six small meals throughout the day instead of two or three big ones.

In fact, your healthcare provider may recommend high energy liquid meal supplements. These can help you get the nutrition you need.

Talk with your healthcare provider to see if you would benefit from using oxygen while you eat.

To help reduce fatigue and shortness of breath when you are preparing a meal, try sitting instead of standing. Also, select foods that are easy to prepare.

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If you're having a good day, try preparing extra portions that you can save for times when you may not feel up to cooking.

To review there are a lot of things that you can do to reduce the severity of your symptoms associated with eating. Eating quality foods can help you have the energy you need to get the most out of your life.

Work with your healthcare provider, dietitian or nutritionist, to help you choose foods and create meal plans that will help you function at your best.