

# Diet Tips When Eating is Difficult



Health



Having reduced kidney function can lead to symptoms that can make it difficult to maintain adequate nutrition.

Symptoms can vary from person to person but can include; loss of appetite, taste changes, nausea, diarrhoea and/or constipation.

Choosing foods that are of high nutrition quality is important to meet your daily requirements.

## Tips to Manage Different Symptoms

### Dry mouth:

- Keep lips and mouth moist
  - » Use a lip balm
  - » Rinse mouth with water
  - » Use an alcohol free mouth spray /mouth wash e.g. Biotene or Aquae
- Stimulate saliva production
  - » Add a squirt of lemon to water
  - » Suck on frozen fruit e.g. grapes, strawberries or orange pieces
  - » Suck on mints, sour lollies or chew gum

### Decreased Appetite:

- If you get hungry but feel full very quickly
  - » Eat whenever you feel hungry even if it is an odd time e.g. a slice of toast at 2am
  - » Aim to have at least six small meals per day
  - » Have fluids away from meals as they can fill you up
  - » Have plenty of nourishing snacks on hand
- If you never feel hungry
  - » Eat at regular times to avoid missing meals
  - » Use an alarm/timer an help remind you of when to eat
- Nutritious drinks may be easier to manage than solid food. Choosing drinks that contain some energy will help meet your nutritional requirements e.g. milk, smoothies, cordial, lemonade, lemon squash. Discuss suitable nutritional supplement drinks with your dietitian.
- Indulge in your cravings and favourite foods. If you are on a restricted diet, find out from your dietitian if any restrictions can be relaxed while your appetite is poor.
- Serve yourself small portions at meal times. A small amount of food on a large plate can make a meal look less overwhelming.
- Make your food as nourishing as you can
- Try to make meal times as enjoyable as possible e.g eat with friends or family, sit in pleasant surroundings.

## Nausea:

- Rinse your mouth with either water, salty water or a bicarb mouth wash to clean the palate.
- Small, frequent meals may be easier to tolerate than large meals. An empty stomach can increase nausea.
- Starting a meal with a dry cracker or sour food e.g. lemon or citrus fruit may help reduce nausea.
- Try ginger to help settle nausea.
- Cool food are often more appealing. Try sandwiches, salads or cold milk puddings.
- Avoid strong food odours or cooking smells.
- Avoid greasy or fatty foods e.g. fried food, pastries, sausages.
- Sucking on mints or hard boiled lollies may help reduce nausea and stimulate appetite.

### Recipe for Bicarb Mouth Wash

- 500ml water
- 1 teaspoon bicarb soda

Mix well. Use as often as you like to rinse your mouth.



## Taste Changes:

- Rinse your mouth with either water, salty water or a bicarb mouth wash to clean the palate.
- If food tastes bland, try to increase the flavour of food by adding herbs and seasonings e.g. sugar or honey to sweet foods, curry powder, chilli, ginger, onion, garlic, mint or basil to savoury foods. Try foods with strong flavours such as parmesan cheese. Vary the texture of food e.g. adding croutons to a soup.
- If food taste bitter or metallic. Try to marinate meats in a citrus based marinade or try adding a bit of sugar to food. Use plastic utensils at meal times.
- Try marinating meats or serving them with a sauce such as a salt reduced gravy, salt reduced tomato or BBQ sauce.
- If a food tastes too salty or acidic, try adding some sugar or honey.
- If a food tastes too sweet, try adding lemon juice, vinegar or instant coffee.

## Constipation:

- Drink an adequate amount of fluid each day. If you are on a fluid restriction, drink to your allowance.
- Eat at regular times during the day.
- Be sure to move/exercise as best as you can.
- Increasing your fibre intake can assist with bowel movements. Some high fibre foods include fruits and vegetables and wholegrain cereal foods. If you are on a potassium restriction, discuss high fibre, low potassium options with your dietitian.

## Diarrhoea:

- Drink an adequate amount of fluid each day. If you are on a fluid restriction, drink to your allowance.
- Beverages at room temperature may be better than very hot or very cold drinks.
- Smaller, more frequent meals may be easier to tolerate.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine.
- Avoid spicy, fatty foods.

## Reflux or Indigestion:

- Chew your food well and avoid rushing meals.
- Try to relax at meal times.
- Avoid large meals or overeating. It may help to have six small meals per day rather than three large ones.
- Try drinking between meals rather than with meals.
- If you have symptoms at night, try to raise the head of your bed or using a wedge pillow. Avoid having something to eat or drink close to bed time.
- Avoid or limit anything that you know contributes to reflux. Common triggers include:
  - » fatty and spicy foods.
  - » too much coffee or alcohol.
  - » smoking.
  - » wearing tight fitting clothing.
  - » going to bed or lying down after a meal or drink.
  - » stress and anxiety.
  - » becoming constipated.
  - » Chewing gum.

## Nourishing snack ideas:

- Rice puddings
- Raisin bread spread with margarine and jam or honey
- Toasted sandwiches
- Rice cakes with cottage cheese or boiled eggs
- 'snack pack' style fruit or tinned fruit (add cream or ice cream if able to tolerate)
- Crackers with tinned tuna
- Breakfast biscuits
- A small can of tinned spaghetti
- A handful of macadamia nuts
- Breakfast bars/muesli bars
- Home made garlic bread

## Tips for Making Meals more Nourishing

- Dress salads with olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and herbs
- Fry boiled rice in plenty of oil to make fried rice.
- Add olive oil or margarine to boiled pasta and vegetables
- Spread margarine on toast, bread and crackers generously
- Use oil to stir fry meat, chicken or fish. Coat in breadcrumbs before frying to further increase energy.
- Try French toast or egg on toast or an omelette for a quick nourishing meal
- Add cream or ice cream to fruits and desserts