

COPD: Dining Tips



Healthy eating is important if you have COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). Choose healthy foods when eating meals at home or dining out. Food fuels the body. The right mix of nutrients in your diet can help you breathe easier, too. You also need nutrients to fight off infections and stay at a healthy weight. Plus, they give you energy for hardworking breathing muscles. So it's important to choose healthy foods.



Small meals are less likely to cause shortness of breath if you have COPD. Talk with your healthcare provider, a registered nutritionist, or a registered dietitian for help in developing meal plans to meet your nutrition needs. Tell your providers about other health problems you have that may affect your diet.

Here are some tips for making meals work for you:

- Rest before meals or dining out.
- Don't eat gas-forming foods. Gas or bloating can make breathing harder.
- Eat meals early in the morning if you feel too tired to eat later in the day.
- Eat 4 to 6 small meals instead of 3 large ones. Small meals help your lungs fill in and empty out with air more easily. They also help your diaphragm move freely, making it easier to breathe.
- Limit how much fluid you have during meals if drinking liquids makes you feel too full to eat. You can drink fluids an hour after a meal.
- Eat fewer carbohydrates and more fat. This may help you breathe easier. Carbohydrates make more carbon dioxide than fats when your body digests them. Eggs, fish, lean meat, and nuts are good choices.
- Choose foods that are easy to prepare or meals that don't take much time to make. Ask someone to help you with meal preparation so you won't be too tired to eat. Ask your healthcare team about meal

delivery services in your area.

- Limit how much table sugar, candy, cake, soft drinks, and other simple carbohydrates you eat.
- Limit foods with trans fats and saturated fats. Examples are butter, lard, fried foods, cookies, crackers, pastries, hydrogenated vegetable oils, shortening, and fat and skin from meats.
- Choose monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats such as canola, safflower, and corn oils. They don't have cholesterol.
- Choose a good source of protein. Examples are chicken, fish, cheese, lean meat, milk, eggs, poultry, nuts, and dried beans or peas. Eat protein at least twice a day for healthy muscles.
- Try to eat 20 to 30 grams of fiber every day. Bread, pasta, nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables are good sources of fiber. Ask your healthcare provider about how much fiber you should eat each day.
- If you are trying to gain weight, eat fresh fruits, vegetables, and a variety of whole grains. Also choose protein with a higher fat content, such as yogurt, whole milk, and whole milk cheese.
- If you are trying to lose weight, eat fresh fruits and vegetables instead of bread and pasta for most of your complex carbohydrates. Also choose low-fat protein, such as lean meats and low-fat dairy products.
- Ask your healthcare provider how much salt (sodium) you should have each day. Too much sodium causes you to retain fluids. This makes breathing harder. It may also raise your blood pressure.
- Keep hydrated. Drink 48 to 64 ounces of water over the course of the day, unless advised otherwise. Ask your healthcare provider about how much fluid you should drink each day.
- Ask your healthcare provider if you should take any vitamins, minerals, or nutritional supplements.

For more information on healthy meal planning, visit the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#).

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