

Kōwhai Programme

Support for whānau & carers

Small and Tasty Meals

When diagnosed with a life limiting illness, the dietary advice that we're so used to hearing changes. The focus is on quality of life, having energy and not worrying about eating.

Good food and drink helps with:

- Feeling better physically and emotionally.
- supporting immune function.
- wound healing.
- lowering the risk of infection.

Common Food Challenges

Palliative care patients often face a range of symptoms that can make it difficult to eat well.

1. A loss of appetite due to the illness or medications.
2. Nausea and vomiting can make it difficult to eat enough.
3. Some patients may have trouble swallowing due to their illness, which can make it challenging to eat solid foods and pureed meals are not always appealing.
4. Fatigue can make it hard to prepare meals or eat.
5. As a disease progresses, more energy is used, which can cause weight loss.
6. Feeling less hungry near end of life.

For caregivers, watching a loved one struggle with low appetite, not eating, and weight loss can be difficult.

Finding ways to gently encourage eating and drinking won't cure the disease, but it can help with weakness and fatigue.

Eating with others has also been shown to increase what we eat so having people over for a cuppa or a meal can encourage appetite.

Care for the Carer!

Good food and fluid intake is important for support people too! Try to look after your own health so that you are able to provide for others.

Accept offers of help, especially if it's meals – you can always freeze them.

Liquid Supplements

Try offering liquid supplements (Ensure, Up & Go, flavoured milk, Complan) to people who are unable to eat solid foods, or who have a loss of appetite.

Try to have these between meals, not with or just before a meal, as they can be filling.

These can also be added to smoothies, soups, or soft foods to increase calories.

Hints for Adding Energy / Calories

To boost energy/calories try to add protein-rich or full-fat ingredients to meals, desserts and snacks.

For savoury foods try adding:

cheese	nut spreads
oil	coconut cream/milk
butter	milk powder
margarine	evaporated milk
cream	mayonnaise
sour cream	full-fat yoghurt
avocado	dressings
ground seeds	creamy dips
toasted nuts	

For sweet snacks and desserts, try adding:

cream	butter
cream cheese	margarine
ice cream	sugar
condensed milk	honey
full-fat yoghurt	ice cream toppings
skim milk powder	chocolate

Please note, individuals with kidney disease should talk to their doctor before increasing their protein intake.

Healthy eating guidelines may not be useful.
Now is the time to use more fats and sugars.

Easy options are good.

Tips for Preparing Tasty Meals

- Use flavourful ingredients such as herbs, spices and citrus to improve the taste of food and make it more appealing
- Offer a variety of foods, which can also help to prevent boredom with food
- Arranging food in an attractive way and using colorful fruits, vegetables, garnishes can make a meal more tempting
- Consider making meals in advance and freezing them for later use. This can help when you need a quick meal
- Offer food and snacks little and often:
 - Encourage the person to graze through the day. Having six smaller meals and snacks can be easier to eat than a big meal
 - Every mouthful counts! Even if they only eat a bite or two of what you offer it is still helping.
 - Large servings can be off-putting. Try small plates to serve meals and snack
 - Snack often, every hour to hour and a half–
 - Bowls of nuts, chips, chocolate, scroggin sitting around the house can encourage grazing.

Quick and easy snack/meal ideas

- Fresh or canned fruit
- Ice-cream – with toppings
- Crackers with tomato/hummus/cheese/canned tuna or salmon toppings
- Dips with vege sticks (raw or lightly cooked), crackers or corn thins
- Popcorn, potato crisps or pretzels
- Scroggin
 - Mix your favourite cereals, nuts, dried fruit and chocolate together
- Piklets, english muffins or scones with chocolate spread or cream cheese and jam
- Cereal, weetbix, oats, or instant porridge aren't just 'breakfast foods', they can make a great snack anytime
- Muffin and cake mixes
 - Add eggs and oil and they are ready to cook
- Packet rice or instant noodles are a good base for meals
- Canned fruit or Creamy rice
- Nibbles or small bowls of snacks can encourage grazing e.g.
 - Chips, pretzels
 - Nuts
 - Crackers
 - Plain and sweet biscuits
 - Cakes and muffins
 - Chocolate and sweets.

Liquid snacks

- A cup of soup with crackers
- Milks and flavoured drinks
 - Up & Go or flavoured milk
- Smoothie made with milk, yoghurt and fresh, frozen or tinned fruit
 - Try adding a tablespoon of rolled oats to help stay full for longer, or a teaspoon of instant pudding mix to thicken it up.
- Fruit frappé
 - Blend a glass of ice with fruit and milk
 - Swirl some whipped cream and grated chocolate on top.

Bread-based snacks

- Peanut butter sandwich
- A couple of slices of toasted fruit bread with smashed banana
- Baked beans or cream corn on a slice of toast with grated cheese
- Home-made pizza
 - Use muffin splits or pita bread as the base
 - Add some veges, meat and cheese
- Sandwiches
 - Try grainy bread spread with some cottage cheese, hummus or peanut butter
 - Add some veges for crunch
- Toasted sandwiches
 - Cream corn and spring onion
 - Baked beans and cheese
 - Cheese and mushroom
 - Cheese and ham
 - Feta and spinach
- Sweet toasted sandwich
 - Banana and chocolate hazelnut spread or apples and cinnamon
- Sweet wrap
 - Spread of jam, cottage cheese and some fresh fruit all wrapped up in the flat bread
- Bread bases
 - Crumpets, fruit bread, piklets, English muffins - spread with butter or margarine and top with jam, chocolate spread, nut butter, vegemite or marmite.

Check out Supermarket Aisles

Take a little time to check out the many choices for quick and easy foods that can be easily heated or eaten cold

- Rice and pasta
- Tinned soups or casseroles
- Tinned tuna, salmon, chicken
- Dessert aisle
- Breakfast aisle (not just for breakfast!)
- Chiller section for ready made meals and snacks
- Snacks – multi packs of chips or biscuits.

Kitchen stand-bys

When you are caring for someone cooking can be very tiring. Having some easy stand-by foods in the pantry can give you a headstart on meals and snacks.

Fridge

- Cheese, bacon and eggs
 - Scrambled, poached or boiled eggs
 - A quick omelette with cheese, ham and vege
 - Bacon and eggs for a quick tea (add in some veges here for an extra boost)
- Mayonnaise, sour cream or cream cheese for a calorie boost
- Readymade custards, yoghurt and jelly
 - Add some canned fruit
 - Great for snacks or a quick pudding

Freezer

Frozen foods are processed rapidly in NZ so keep most of their nutrients. Not only are they quick to use but they can also provide good amounts of vitamins and minerals. They're also often a cheaper option.

- Frozen veges and stir fry mixes
- Frozen fish and chicken
 - Pop in the oven with oven chips and add some veges on the side
- Frozen ready meals
 - A wide variety available to purchase for a fast on hand meal
 - Check the Navigating the System handout for options in your area
- Ice cream/frozen yoghurt
 - Good to add to milkshakes/smoothies or with fruit

Cupboard/pantry

- Canned goods
 - Fish
 - Mix cooked pasta, rice or noodles and frozen vege for a quick balanced meal
 - Microwave a potato and top with tuna, spring onion and sour cream

- Baked beans, spaghetti or cream corn
 - On toast, and topped with grated cheese
- Soups
- Tinned fruit or creamy rice
- Muffin and cake mixes.

Managing Symptoms

Treating pain, nausea or other symptoms can help with eating and improve quality of life. If eating is a struggle, even though with a good appetite, it could be due to factors such as tiredness, dry mouth, or nausea.

Dry Mouth

- Try frequent mouth rinsing and/or water spray
- Suck on ice chips or frozen fruit cubes e.g. pineapple
- Apply lip balm
- Suck on sugarfree sweets (this can cause loose bowel motions in some people)
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Moisten foods with sauces and gravies
- Maintain good oral hygiene
- Swab the mouth with rice bran or grapeseed oil with a drop of peppermint essence
- Ask your chemist about Oral 7, Biotene or GC mouth gels and chewing gums.

Mouth/Throat Pain

- Use anaesthetic mouth rinses
- Choose soft, bland, pureed and moist foods
- Avoid acidic, spicy, salty foods and fizzy drinks.

Taste and Smell Changes

- Experiment with flavours such as lemon juice, herbs, chutneys/pickles, spices and chocolate
- Marinate meats with sauces, try adding flavourful herbs and spices
- Stronger tasting food can be helpful e.g. garlic, onions, spices, pickles, mustards etc.
- If salty flavours are harder to taste, try pickled meats and produce such as corned beef, silverside, sausages, bacon, salami, paté, olives, anchovies, canned or smoked fish, smoked chicken, tasty, feta or parmesan cheese
- Salted nuts make a great snack
- Try some new foods – sometimes foods they didn't like now taste ok
- Use convenience foods like canned soups, instant meals, ready-made custard etc. as they often have more flavour
- For extra flavour add fruit or fruit puree to ice cream, jellies milkshakes or puddings
- Sugar free gums or mints can help the bad taste in the mouth.

Nausea and vomiting

Eating regularly can help with the nausea and vomiting. Often they might need to make a deliberate effort to eat.

- Take regular anti-nausea medication
- If smell is putting someone off eating, foods may taste better cold or room temperature. Keeping away from the kitchen when meals are being cooked can also be helpful
- Eat little and often – an empty stomach can make them feel worse
- Eat when they feel well – if morning is the best time have an egg on toast or lightly cooked breakfast
- Try nibbling on cracker or plain biscuit before getting up
- Salty foods can help – try toast, clear soups, chips or crackers
- Use a container with a lid to drink soups from
- Keep a supply of frozen meals in the freezer for quick and easy heating
- If food is not wanted, sip nourishing fluids such as milk-based drinks, smoothies and fruit juice.
- If they can't eat keep drinking, especially between meals
- Eat and drink slowly
- Avoid fried or fatty foods and highly spiced foods
- Some people find ginger helpful for reducing nausea.

Fatigue

- Have small regular meals and snacks
- Choose foods that they enjoy and are easy to eat e.g. don't take much effort to chew
- Sit down and rest before meals.

Diarrhoea

- Avoid high fibre foods like cereal, wholegrains, raw vegetables, vegetable skins, prunes and licorice
- Sip nourishing drinks and try and stay hydrated.

ENDING LIFE WELL

A podcast series for carers

<https://otagohospice.co.nz/patient-services/kowhai-programme/carers-podcast/>

You might like to listen to this topic on the Ending Life Well Podcast available on most podcast sites and on the Otago Community Hospice webpage.

