

# Tips to Nourish Your Body When You have Low Appetite or Little Interest in Food

## Low Appetite or Little Interest in Food

It is important to make sure you are eating enough healthful foods to nourish your body and give you the energy you need to feel your best — body, mind and spirit.

Stressful situations such as having a health problem (including mental health conditions) or going through a life event (getting married, moving, losing a loved one) can cause low appetite or little interest in food. Sometimes it is easy to “forget to eat” if you are distracted by long-lasting (chronic) worry or anxiety.

Everyday stresses can also cause low appetite or little interest in food. Family conflicts, work problems or a too-busy schedule can prevent you from taking the time to prepare healthful meals. For some, the effort it takes to cook can be overwhelming and prevent them from eating well (or at all).

Having a low appetite or little interest in food is not normal and can lead to malnutrition (not giving your body the nutrition it needs). It is important to talk with your health care provider or mental health care provider if you no longer feel like eating.

**Remember:** When your body is not properly nourished, it will take longer to heal and recover. You may also have problems concentrating. You need to eat well to be well!

## Tips to Nourish Your Body

There are some things you can do to make sure you are eating well and nourishing your body.

- Eat smaller meals more often throughout the day with snacks in between. You can think of it as splitting each of your typical meals in half. An example of this meal and snack plan could be:
  - 6 a.m.: half of breakfast
  - 8 a.m.: half of breakfast
  - 10 a.m.: morning snack
  - 12 p.m.: half of lunch
  - 2 p.m.: half of lunch
  - 4 p.m.: afternoon snack
  - 6 p.m. half of dinner
  - 8 p.m.: half of dinner
  - 10 p.m. bedtime snack
- Include high-protein foods with each of your meals and snacks. Examples of high-protein foods include:
  - beef
  - fish
  - chicken and turkey (poultry)
  - eggs
  - cheese
  - milk and yogurt
  - nuts or nut butters
  - seeds

*(over)*

- beans
- tofu
- tempeh
- soy.
- Add extra nutrition to meals and snacks by doing the following.
  - Use whole milk instead of low-fat or fat-free milk.
  - Add milk powder to soups, smoothies or oatmeal.
  - Drink a ready-to-drink nutrition beverage such as Boost<sup>®</sup>, Ensure<sup>®</sup> or Carnation<sup>®</sup> Breakfast Essentials<sup>™</sup>. (Look for products with 200 to 400 calories in each serving.)
  - Include a source of fat with each meal such as cheese, sauce, oil, butter, mayo or salad dressing.
- Do not eat or drink “low-calorie,” “low-fat,” “diet” or “lite” products.
- Set an alarm for meal times. When you hear the alarm, it is time to eat!
- Cook large batches of food to freeze in small portions. That way, if you are not feeling well enough to cook, you have plenty of options to simply heat and eat!
- Keep grab-and-go snacks on hand (trail mix, dried fruits, nuts, seeds, protein or granola bars) for busy days.

When your desire to eat returns, you can go back eating as you normally do.

### **Whom to Call With Questions**

Talk with your health care provider or dietitian if you have questions.