

What to Eat and Drink When You Have a Virus

General Information

Two common symptoms of a viral illness are loss of appetite and fever. If your illness lasts for up to a week or longer, you may not feel hungry or thirsty, but it is important that you continue to eat and drink.

Your body needs calories and protein to maintain muscle and to support your immune system to fight the virus.

Keep Hydrated

Drink plenty of liquids to reduce your risk of dehydration. Two signs of dehydration are dry mouth and dark or concentrated urine.

To reduce your risk of dehydration:

- Drink 2 to 4 ounces of water or clear liquids every 15 minutes. Take small sips often.
- Drink a variety of liquids or foods that have liquids such as:
 - broth
 - coffee or tea
 - clear fruit juices
 - gelatin, fruit ice and Popsicles®
 - rehydration solutions* such as Pedialyte® (These drinks have electrolytes which are minerals your body needs to work properly.)
 - nutritional supplements* such as Ensure®, Boost®, Carnation® Breakfast Essentials®
 - protein shakes
 - sports drinks such as Gatorade®.

Eat Foods High in Calories and Protein

- If you eat less than half of what you normally do, try to add snacks between meals. Snack ideas include:
 - a milkshake made with Greek yogurt
 - a nutritional supplement available at a grocery store or drug store.
- Eat small meals that include protein and carbohydrates every 2 to 3 hours.
- Examples of foods that are high in protein include:
 - beef, pork and goat
 - chicken, turkey, duck and goose
 - beans and legumes
 - cheese
 - eggs
 - nuts and seeds
 - peanut butter and other nut butters.
- Examples of foods that are good sources of carbohydrates include:
 - whole grain bread, cereals and pastas
 - brown or wild rice
 - fruit (fresh, canned or juice)
 - vegetables such as squash, potatoes, sweet potatoes and corn.

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- Include some fat with your meals such as cheese, sour cream, butter or mayonnaise.
- Foods that are cold or room temperature may taste better than a cooked meal. Ideas include sandwiches or cottage cheese.
- Use plastic utensils if food has a metallic taste.
- It's OK to add sugar to foods and drinks.
- Eat fruit along with a protein such as apple slices with cheese or peanut butter.

Weigh Yourself Each Day

Weight loss can mean you are losing important body fluids, muscle and body fat. If this happens you will feel weak and have trouble doing things such as getting out of bed, walking or other normal activities.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you:

- lose 5 pounds or more in a week
- feel worse or have new symptoms.

***Make Your Own Rehydration Solution**

To make your own rehydration solution you need:

- 6 teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 ½ cups water.

Mix all ingredients in a pitcher and chill.

You can use powder sticks to add flavor such as sweet tea, grape or orange.