

PARKINSON DIET

EAT BETTER. FEEL BETTER.

Decreased Appetite & Parkinson's

Decreased appetite is a common problem for people with Parkinson's that can affect your ability to consume an adequate amount of food and fluid. There are many reasons your appetite may decrease with Parkinson's including low mood, nausea, decreased sense of smell, constipation, swallowing difficulties, fatigue and certain medications. Inadequate food and fluid intake can lead to weight loss which has been associated with malnutrition. Weight loss and malnutrition can result in poor health outcomes and may impact disease progression. For these reasons addressing issues with your appetite is extremely important.

Even though you may not feel hungry, your body still needs nourishment to maintain your weight and keep you healthy. The following strategies may help you eat better while your appetite is decreased:

Nutrition Tips

- Try not to skip or miss meals.
- Take advantage of the times in the day when you feel best to eat more. Many people have their best appetite in the morning.
- Do not wait until you feel hungry to eat, instead try to eat something every 2-3 hours. If required, set an alarm to remind you to eat.
- Large meals can be overwhelming and discouraging. As an alternative try consuming smaller and more frequent meals and snacks.
- Serve food on small plates and make meals visually appealing.
- Between meal snacks are important when you are eating less at meals. Keep snacks on hand that are ready to eat. Take snacks with you if you are going out for the day e.g. fruits, nuts/seeds etc.
- Try drinking fluids between meals as having fluids with your meals can fill you up.
- Choose nourishing fluids and sip on these between meals e.g. smoothies, vegetable juices, soups etc.
- Make every mouthful count by eating calorie and nutrient-dense foods.

- Fortify foods and fluids by adding extra calories and nutrients without increasing their size or volume too much. Fortifying foods and fluids with healthy fats is a great way to boost your calorie and nutrient intake. For example, drizzle extra virgin olive oil over vegetables, add roasted pine nuts to a salad or add avocado to a smoothie.
- Take steps to manage and prevent [constipation](#).
- You may find softer foods which require less chewing easier to eat.
- Address [swallowing difficulties](#) by seeking professional help as soon as possible. Early detection and individualised treatment are crucial. As part of your treatment plan a texture modified diet or thickened fluids may be suggested to make eating and drinking safer, easier and less stressful.
- Take the time to plan and prepare meals and snacks in advance so they are always available. Write a list of the ingredients you need before going to the shops. Allow family and friends to assist with food shopping and cooking where possible.
- During “on time” when your levodopa-containing medication is working and symptoms are controlled, cook larger quantities of meals and store as individual serves in the freezer, for when you don’t feel up to cooking e.g. during “off time” when levodopa-containing medication is not working optimally.
- Make mealtimes pleasant by eating in a positive and nurturing environment. Try setting the table or playing soft music while eating. Dining in the company of others may help stimulate appetite.
- Monitor your weight regularly to identify changes.

Decreased appetite is a common problem for people with Parkinson’s which can impact your nutritional status and quality of life. If you or your loved one is experiencing this issue talk to your treating Doctor or Neurologist and consider seeing a Dietitian for individualised advice tailored to your needs.

Source: Ma K, Xiong N, Shen Y, et al. Weight Loss and Malnutrition in Patients with Parkinson's Disease: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects. Front Aging Neurosci. 2018;10:1.



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