

## What can I do?

The tips in this leaflet show you some of the things other people have found helpful when living with eating difficulties.

You can also talk to your nurse or doctor who will be able to assess the reason for the change in your eating habits. The cause may be treatable.

## Further information

***Have you got a small appetite?***  
(2001) British Dietetic Association

[www.mru.nursing.soton.ac.uk/patient.html](http://www.mru.nursing.soton.ac.uk/patient.html)  
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# LIVING WITH CHANGES IN YOUR APPETITE

Information to help people living with cancer

# Are you living with advanced cancer? Do you find that you are not eating as much as you used to?

If you are concerned about what you are eating, this leaflet can help you to know if you are making the most of your appetite. It tells you about some of the most common concerns and gives examples of what others have found helpful.

## Tips to help you live with loss of appetite

### I find eating hard work

Soft food is easiest to eat because it does not need chewing. You could try porridge, Weetabix® with milk, custards, milk puddings, stewed fruits, bananas, yogurts or milk-based drinks.

Drinking high energy and protein fluids, such as milkshakes, yogurt drinks or liquid nutritional supplements may be easier than eating.

### I find my appetite changes

You may find that the amount you can eat changes from day to day for no reason. What you fancy may even change from hour to hour.

It is best to eat what you fancy. Eat on the days and at the times that you feel able to. This may not be at times you used to eat. To do this you may need to keep a stock of different tinned foods and pre-prepared frozen meals.

### I feel hungry, but can't eat much

It may be helpful to have your portion served on a small plate. Perhaps have just a little of one of the foods other people are eating. If you feel full after a few mouthfuls at mealtimes, it can be a good idea to snack on nuts, crisps, toast, chocolate or biscuits between meals.

### I never feel like eating anything

Try experimenting with different tastes. You may find you now like cold food or foods you would not have eaten in the past. Some people discover that although they used to prefer sweet foods they now prefer savoury, or visa versa.

### I find preparing food wears me out

Using ready-made meals and accepting offers of help with cooking can make life easier. Quick food can be as good for you as a meal that takes a long time to prepare.

### I worry that I upset other people when I don't eat

Listen to your body and try to explain to others what your body is telling you about eating. You can tell them that it's not their cooking, but the way you feel that is affecting your appetite.

### I want to make the most of the appetite I have

Consider what your body will cope with and choose to eat or drink the things that contain most calories, protein or vitamins. Easy to eat foods that have all three include, smoothies, stewed fruit with custard, and cauliflower cheese.

## Common questions

### Do other people have the same problem?

Three out of four people with advanced cancer live with a change in their eating habits. Eating difficulties include loss of appetite and changes in the taste, texture and smell of food. Some cancers cause particular eating problems, such as difficulty swallowing.

### Why am I eating differently?

There are many reasons why your eating habits can change. Treatments and medicines can affect how you feel about eating. Feeling sick, having diarrhoea or constipation can stop you wanting to eat. Feeling low in mood, tiredness or pain can also make eating difficult.

Even if your cancer is not causing you other problems, it can affect your eating habits. This is because your body's response to the cancer can include losing your desire to eat.