



# EATING WELL FOR LUNG HEALTH

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## WHY IS EATING WELL IMPORTANT FOR LUNG HEALTH?

Eating well is an important part of lung health. However, different lung disease, treatments, symptoms, and side effects from medications, may affect the body in ways that require unique nutritional needs. People living with lung disease may feel an increase or decrease in appetite, experience weight gain or weight loss, and/or may lack certain nutritional needs. Lung disease symptoms like breathlessness, fatigue, and chest tightness can make eating hard, uncomfortable, and a lot of work. Managing these symptoms requires extra energy and proper nutrition can help support this. Eating well improves your energy level, helps to maintain your muscle strength and may reduce your risk of developing lung infections. No matter what your lung disease is, the food you eat can impact your overall health.



## GENERAL TIPS

Although there is no specific diet linked to improving lung health, eating a balanced diet of fresh, whole foods is good for your overall health and may help manage certain lung diseases.

- **Eat a variety of healthy foods each day.** To achieve a healthy balanced diet, Canada's Food Guide recommends eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, protein foods, as well as whole grain foods.
- **Make water your drink of choice.** Water is a great way to stay hydrated without calories. We lose water when we breathe, sweat, and get rid of waste. Drinking water replaces what is lost.
- **Eat protein rich meals.** Protein foods can help maintain and build muscles. Protein not only helps keep you strong and function better, it helps you feel full longer and can help you achieve a healthy weight. Excess weight around the abdominals can push down the chest causing pressure on the chest wall making it harder to take bigger breaths. Examples of protein rich foods include dairy, eggs, nuts, seeds, lean meats, fish, peanut butter and beans.
- **Limit foods that don't contribute to your health and lung health.** Limit sugary, processed foods that have few nutritional benefits.
- **Talk to an expert.** Speak with a registered dietitian.



## Foods that may support lung function

Studies have shown that certain foods may help support lung function like those foods rich in Vitamin D, Vitamin A, and Magnesium.

<b>Vitamin D</b>	<p><b>*Vitamin D comes from 3 sources:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sunshine</li><li>2. Food</li><li>3. Supplements</li></ol> <p>Few foods naturally have vitamin D, though some foods have vitamin D added to them. Some people do not get enough vitamin D in the winter months, because they aren't outdoors often. Speak to your health care team to see if a Vitamin D supplement is right for you and the amount recommended.</p> <p><b>Vitamin D Food Sources:</b> cod liver oil, salmon, swordfish, tuna fish , orange juice fortified with vitamin D, dairy and plant milks fortified with vitamin D, sardines, beef liver, egg yolk, fortified cereals</p>
<b>Vitamin A</b>	<p><b>Vitamin A Food Sources:</b> Leafy green vegetables, orange and yellow vegetables, tomatoes, red bell pepper, cantaloupe, mango, beef liver, fish oils, milk, eggs, fortified foods</p>
<b>Magnesium</b>	<p><b>Magnesium Food Sources:</b> plant foods like legumes, dark green leafy vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, fortified cereals and fish, poultry, and beef.</p>

## Tips if you are breathless when eating

- **Eat small frequent meals and snacks instead of three large meals.** Overeating can make breathing uncomfortable. A full stomach can press on the diaphragm making it more difficult to breathe. The diaphragm is the main muscle we use to breathe.
- **Breathe evenly.** While you are chewing foods breathe evenly, stop and relax after a few bites and then take a few breaths before eating again.
- **Eat slowly.** Take your time with smaller bites and chew foods thoroughly to help to make breathing easier.
- **Eat solid foods at first and drink liquids at the end of the meal.** Eating solid foods first helps your stomach from feeling too full and makes it easier to breathe.
- **Wear your oxygen while eating if continuous oxygen is prescribed.**
- **Maintain good posture.** Good posture while sitting and eating helps takes some pressure off the lungs.
- **Limit your salt (sodium) intake to 1 tsp of salt = 2300 mg of sodium/day.** Salt can increase your blood pressure and cause your body to hold onto fluid. This may cause you to have more difficulty with your breathing.



## Tips if you are fatigued when eating

- **Eat a healthy breakfast.** Starting your day right by eating a healthy breakfast can help boost your energy.
- **Choose foods that are healthy and easy to prepare.**
- **When cooking, try making extra and freezing meals for days when you are more tired.**
- **Order pre-made healthy meals.**

## Tips if you cough up mucus

- **Drink plenty of water.** Aim for 6-8 cups each day to help keep your mucus thin and easier to cough up.
- **Drink a lower fat milk.** The fat content in milk can thicken saliva already present.

## Tips if you have a poor appetite

- **Eat small, frequent meals and snacks throughout the day.**
- **Try to eat as many different types of food at each meal.**
- **Include your favorite food often.**
- **Eat more food at the time of day when your appetite is the best.**
- **Limit your fluid intake before and during meals. Filling up on drinks may curb your appetite.**
- **If you need to gain weight, select high calorie and high protein foods frequently at meal and snack times.**
- **Limit foods that have few nutrients.**

## Tips if you are overweight

Being overweight with lung disease increases the workload on your heart and lungs. Excess fat around the abdominal area makes it harder to breathe.



- **Limit your intake of fats and sugars.**
- **Eat smaller meals and lower calorie snacks.**
- **Increase your intake of vegetables and fruits.**
- **Choose whole grain breads and cereals.**
- **Choose lower fat milk and cheese products.**
- **Choose leaner meats, poultry and fish.**
- **Trim the fat off meats, remove skin from chicken, and avoid frying food.**
- **Choose lentils, dried beans, and peas more often in your meals.**
- **Be mindful of your eating habits.**
- **Cook at home more often and eat out less.**

When you cook your meals, you have full control over what you are eating.

## FOOD ALLERGIES AND SENSITIVITIES

### Can food allergies affect my lung condition?

It is best to avoid any foods you are allergic to. Allergic reactions can make your lung condition, especially asthma, flare-up and make your symptoms harder manage. Allergic reactions happen when the body's immune system overreacts to a particular allergen. These reactions may be caused by food.



## What are the most common food allergens?

**An allergen is a substance that can cause an allergic reaction.** In Canada, the most common food allergens are:

- peanuts
- tree nuts (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts pistachio nuts and walnuts)
- sesame seeds
- milk, eggs
- fish
- seafood
- soy
- wheat or triticale (a hybrid of wheat and rye grains)
- mustard.

## Can sulphites affect my lung condition?

**Sulphites are things that are added to certain foods.**

Those who have asthma are most at risk to sulphite sensitivity and other forms of sulphite reactions. They do not cause true allergic reaction, but for certain people they may cause allergy-like symptoms. There is no allergy testing available for sulphites.

**Examples of foods and products that often contain sulphites;**

- Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beer and cider
- Bottled lemon and lime juices and concentrates
- Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Cereal, cornmeal, cornstarch, crackers and muesli
- Condiments
- Dehydrated, mashed, peeled and pre-cut potatoes, and frozen french fries
- Dried fruits and vegetables
- Dried herbs, spices and teas
- Fresh grapes
- Fruit fillings and syrups, gelatin, jams, jellies, preserves, marmalade, molasses and pectin
- Fruit and vegetable juices
- Candied fruits
- Starches
- Sugar syrups
- Tomato pastes, pulps and purees
- Vinegar and wine vinegar
- Wine

## What should I do if I think I have a food sensitivity or allergy?

- **Speak with your health care team if you are concerned about a food sensitivity or allergy.**
- **Try removing the food(s) from your diet.**
- **Ask about being referred to an allergist – a doctor that specializes in people living with allergies.**
- **Read food labels.**
- **Don't eat foods that you don't know what the ingredients are.**
- **Avoid foods you know you are allergic to or have a food sensitivity to.**
- **Learn more about food allergies.**

## Other Considerations

Many people with lung disease develop GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease) as a result of excessive coughing, throat irritation, or certain foods. GERD is a condition in which the stomach contents move up into the esophagus.

## Tips if you have GERD symptoms

- Eat smaller, frequent meals so food can be digested more easily
- Eat slowly and chew food well
- Maintain an upright position for 30-60 minutes before, after and during mealtimes
- Avoid late night meals
- Avoid lying down after a meal
- Raise the head of your bed to sleep
- Lose weight (if overweight)
- Speak to your health care team about medications to help treat your GERD
- Avoid foods that are high in fat, spicy, or highly acidic such as:
  - Citrus or tomato-based products
  - Peppermint
  - Chocolate
  - Alcohol
  - Nicotine
  - Tea, coffee (caffeine)
  - Citric foods like tomatoes and oranges
  - Carbonated beverages

## OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

Watch this Video:

[Nutrition for COPD and Pulmonary Fibrosis Webinar Video Recording](#)