

Eating Problems & Poor Appetite

Many persons living with HIV/AIDS experience a lack of appetite from time to time, particularly when using numerous medications. It is important to find ways to maintain your intake to stay as healthy as possible and to maintain a normal weight. Here are several suggestions.

Choose foods you like and smell wonderful to stimulate your appetite and try to eat in a pleasant atmosphere. Attractive place settings, bright surroundings, candles, music and good company can help make meals more enjoyable. Ask family and friends to make meals you enjoy.

On days when you do feel more like eating, make the most of it to help “catch up” for days when you don’t feel so great. Keep single size portions of ready-to-heat foods handy (maybe in the freezer) so you can heat them up quickly when your appetite returns.

On days when your appetite is just gone, try sipping on caloric beverages such as 100% fruit juice, smoothies or commercial liquid supplements to ensure your body gets some nutrition. If necessary, set your alarm to remind you when it’s time to eat.

Keep nutritious snacks handy for nibbling especially while doing other activities such as watching TV, reading or driving. Be careful to choose foods with no hazard of choking. In this way, you may unconsciously eat more even if your appetite is not so great.

Continuing as many of your usual daily activities as possible may help to improve your appetite. You can also try light exercise or get some fresh air before meals.

If you like to cook, go to the library and get some interesting cookbooks and try new recipes. The internet is another wonderful resource for recipes and cooking tips. Try preparing well-liked foods in different combinations or in different ways. Vary the color of your foods and arrange them attractively. Try some garnishes like parsley, lemon wedges, paprika sprinkles or grated parmesan cheese.

If your appetite is poor for quite a long time, ask your health care provider about liquid nutritional supplements or medicines that can stimulate appetite such as Marinol[®], Megase[®] or Periactin[®].