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What To Do When You Don't Feel Like Eating

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea can be caused by uremia (a build up of toxins in the blood). Other causes include intense pain, fatigue, medications, other illnesses, stress and constipation. Ongoing nausea and/or vomiting can lead to malnutrition.

Effective treatment for nausea may be different for each person. To help you control nausea and vomiting:

- Take anti-nausea or other medications as prescribed.
- Avoid spicy, strong-smelling and high fat foods.
- Rinse your mouth before eating to remove bad tastes.
- Eat small frequent meals and snacks instead of large ones.
- Eat in a relaxed atmosphere that is well ventilated and does not smell of strong food or cooking odours.
- Choose bland foods (toast, crackers, rice) and foods served cool or at room temperature (hardboiled eggs, sandwich).
- Nibble on crystallized ginger or sip ginger tea or gingerale.
- Treat constipation and ask your dietitian for a list of high fiber foods to help prevent constipation.
- Talk to your dietitian if nausea and vomiting persist to make sure you are getting enough nutrition.
- If you are on dialysis, make sure not to miss any treatments. Dialysis removes the toxins from your blood which can relieve nausea.

Poor Appetite

Loss of appetite is a common problem when the kidneys fail to clean wastes out of the blood or when dialysis is inadequate. Getting enough protein and calories is important for staying healthy. Work with your dietitian to find meals that are appealing to you and provide the nutrients you need. If your appetite is poor:

- Eat small frequent meals and high calorie snacks throughout the day (eat every 2-3 hours).
- If you don't feel like eating in the morning, have a light snack and eat later in the day.
- Eat your biggest meal when your appetite is best. If you're not hungry in the evening, have your main meals at breakfast, mid-morning snack or lunch.



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- Have a good meal before dialysis if you are too tired to eat after.
- Carry snacks with you if you are going to be away from home during the day, at treatment or at work.
- Plan menus in advance.
- Schedule meals and snacks – set an alarm to remind you to eat.
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- Make every mouthful count. Add extra protein and calories to food:
 - Add margarine to rice, noodles, vegetables and bread.
 - Use honey, jelly, jam, margarine or cream cheese on toast, bread and crackers.
 - Mix cooked ground beef or cooked chicken into soups, pasta or rice.
 - Add cheese to vegetables, salads or casseroles.
 - Add hard boiled egg or tuna to your salad.
 - Spread peanut butter on crackers, bread or fruit.
 - Add tofu to soups, stews or stir-fries.
 - Eat cottage cheese with fruit.
 - Snack on crackers and cheese.
 - Use “good” fats liberally. Try dipping bread in olive oil.
 - Sauté foods in olive or canola oil.
 - Add low salt dressings to salads and vegetables.
 - Drink beverages that contain calories.
 - Add sugar or honey to your coffee and tea.
 - Use non-dairy whipped topping on fruits and desserts.
 - Treat yourself to a high calorie dessert each day if you don’t have diabetes.
- Experiment with different foods.
- Take small bites. Eating little by little adds up and makes a big difference by the end of the day.
- Try taking a walk or getting some fresh air to help make you hungrier.
- Ask your dietitian about trying a kidney-friendly liquid supplement.

What can I do if I am too tired to cook or eat?

- Ask your dietitian about easy meals to make and for additional ideas take a look at the Easy Meals to Make information that is also included in the “Managing Your Diet” section of the Kidney Community Kitchen.
- Arrange for help in preparing meals. Ask family and friends to help prepare meals.
- Prepare food in bulk and freeze in single serving containers.



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- Consider community meal programs like Meals on Wheels. Ask your local grocery stores about home delivery.
- Keep your cupboards stocked with foods that are ready-to-eat or easily prepared.
- Foods that are soft, moist or mixed in a blender may be easier to eat as they require less effort to chew and swallow. Try:
 - Soups and stews
 - Soft sandwich fillings
 - Pasta
 - Scrambled or soft boiled eggs
 - Soft cooked vegetables with cheese sauce
 - Cottage cheese and canned fruit
- Ask your dietitian about trying a kidney-friendly liquid supplement.

Taste Changes

Having uremia can change the way food tastes to you. You may no longer like foods you used to crave. Suggestions to help cope with taste changes include:

- Experiment with food flavours (sour, salty, sweet, and bitter) and keep a list of foods that taste good to you.
- Rinse your mouth before eating to remove bad tastes. Try cool water with lemon, lime or cucumber or sparkling mineral water.
- Try eating foods cold or at room temperature.
- Eat meat with something sweet like cranberry sauce, mint jelly or applesauce.
- Marinate meat, chicken and fish to help mask bitter tastes.
- Substitute poultry, fish, eggs and cheese for red meat.
- If foods taste metallic, try plastic utensils and glass cookware.
- Use lemon drops, gum or mints.
- Add spices to foods.
- Tart foods before a meal may improve flavour (sherbet, lemon or soda).