

# Breathlessness and Nutrition

**Many factors influence breathlessness, which can contribute to poor nutrition outcomes such as weight loss, fatigue and frailty.**

Breathlessness can occur due to partial obstruction of airflow into the lungs. When we swallow, we hold our breath- therefore we inspire less oxygen when eating.

Medications may result in taste changes, so food may taste unpleasant. Dry mouth may lead to swallowing difficulties. Breathlessness can lead to general fatigue, longer mealtimes.

Labored breathing increases energy requirements (10-15% higher than usual).

Other factors associated with breathlessness that can negatively influence appetite include pain, lower activity levels, nausea and constipation.

People sometimes also find they are overwhelmed by task of food preparation which reduces their interest in meals.

## **Nutrition strategies to assist with breathlessness**

- Aim for a varied diet including all food groups, prioritising protein to maintain muscle mass and strength
- Small meals and eat more often (aim for 6 small meals per day)
- Try cold foods if smell is impacting your intake
- Pre-prepared meals – from supermarket, meal delivery services, takeaway
- Moderate serves of carbohydrate – to control carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) output (more CO<sub>2</sub> is produced metabolising carbohydrate compared to fat and protein)
- Eat sitting up at a table
- Eat slowly and chew thoroughly to avoid swallowing air
- Limit salt – can lead to fluid retention

## **Snacks ideas – High energy and PROTEIN RICH**

- nuts, dried fruit or dips
- yogurt /custard /dairy desserts/ milk-based drinks
- cheese & crackers
- trail mix
- roasted chickpeas/broad beans
- dumplings, sushi, quiches, rice paper rolls, falafel