The Connection Between COPD and Weight Loss

by BRENDA VANTA

COPD and Weight Loss

Between 40 and 70 percent of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) sufferers lose weight without wanting to do so. There are several reasons why this happens, but with certain measures you can manage weight loss and achieve your optimal weight.

Perhaps the most common reason for weight loss is simply the loss of appetite. Many people with COPD find food loses its appeal and doesn't taste as good as it did before they had this condition. The explanation in this case is that chronic mouth breathing can affect the sensation of taste.

Others feel fatigued and don't have enough energy to prepare meals — even chewing and swallowing can drain them of energy.

Various drugs can influence the appetite as well — one example is antibiotics that can cause digestive side effects such as nausea and diarrhea. Drugs can also impair the absorption of essential nutrients, leading to malabsorbtion and weight loss this way.

Weight loss is also associated with weak muscles, as your body will break down the fat and muscle tissue to get energy. The muscles involved in respiration are also affected, making your breathing more difficult.

Therefore, you need to increase your caloric intake to re-gain some weight.

Forget About Dishes That Take Hours to Prepare and Cook

There are plenty of recipes that can be prepared in 10 – 15 minutes or less, even for dinner. Even better, ask your family and friends to prepare meals for you, or consider companies that deliver meals at home (i.e. Meals on Wheels).

The Less You Cook Your Fruits and Vegetables, the More Nutrients They Retain

Some vitamins (i.e. B and C vitamins) are easily destroyed by cooking. Try to eat your vegetables fresh or steamed as much as possible. Make sure you wash them thoroughly.

Avoid Chewing Too Much

You can make smoothies or puree the fruits and veggies, mince or grind up the meats, and use dips or a mix of balsamic vinegar and oil to soften the bread.

Eat Smart

Add a few healthy, nutritious snacks between meals, rather than having heavier main meals. For example, have a protein shake or a smoothie, dried fruits, a few slices of avocado, a cup of cottage cheese, soft nuts and granola. Keep these snacks handy (on the table, in your purse) so you can enjoy them any time.

Your diet should include plenty of vegetables and legumes, some fruits, wholesome grains, lean meats and fish, healthy oils, nuts and seeds. Avoid excessive carbohydrates (especially the refined ones from white breads, pastas, pastry and sweets), and red fatty meats.

Enjoy Your Dinner

Don’t watch TV or talk on the phone when you eat. Have family or friends at dinner, put some music on, and avoid any arguments or stressful topics for conversation.

Maintain a good posture (sit upright and lean forward). If you feel tired or experience shortness of breath, rest after your meal. If you are on oxygen therapy, ask your doctor if you need to increase the flow rate when you are eating, or during other activities that require extra energy.