How to Save Energy in the Kitchen

by RUSSELL WINWOOD

COPD in the Kitchen: Tips for Cooking and Chores

Is the whole idea of preparing meals, cooking and eating, too much to deal with some days? Many patients struggle with this essential part of managing their disease. Not eating and eating the wrong types of foods can have serious consequences for people living with COPD.

Why Is Eating Important?

Apart from the obvious, if we don't eat, we perish. Eating is essential to maintain weight and in particular, muscles. A patient who is wasting away will experience an avalanche of health issues.

The increased lack of energy we feel from not eating means we are less likely to be active. Less activity means muscle wasting and a loss of fitness. The loss of fitness can increase breathlessness which increases the burden on our lungs.

The increase in energy required for our lungs to cope with the demands of becoming more breathless means we require more nutrients, and so we fall into a vicious cycle.

The less we eat, the fewer nutrients we supply our bodies, creating a shortfall in energy when our lungs demand it. Our bodies are made up of millions of cells which need nutrients to maintain their health and to keep our organs operating in the way they were designed.

For a COPD patient, correct nutrition is very important as we are dealing with damaged lungs. While our lungs have their problems, they still need to do a job, and this job needs to be well fuelled.

Also, many COPD patients are also dealing with other health issues which require an increase in energy demands.

What Should People With COPD Eat?

If you search COPD nutrition on the internet, you will find a wealth of information and opinions on what a COPD patient should eat.

Some of this information will be good, however, in my experience, most will be dietary guidelines for the general public and will not take into account the types of foods COPD patients should avoid.

To simplify what we should eat as COPD patients we need to look at what is supported by science. Foods come in the form of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.

Each of these foods produces varying amounts of carbon dioxide as we eat them. Carbohydrates provide the

most carbon dioxide when eating, followed by protein and fats producing the least.

For COPD patients whose lungs have issues removing carbon dioxide wouldn't it make sense not to eat foods which produce the most carbon dioxide?

Many dietary recommendations for COPD patients include eating pasta, rice, and bread. While these foods can provide the basis for some delicious meals, they are also high in carbohydrates.

If you are anything like me, eating foods like this will make you very breathless. So, it becomes very important for patients to construct a diet which limits the consumption of high carbohydrate foods.

The Research

Scientific studies have suggested for many years a high-fat, and low-carbohydrate diet is beneficial for respiratory patients.

When we talk about fats, we are not talking about vats of fats used for frying foods. We are talking about healthy fats which can be found in foods like avocados, salmon and certain nuts, just to name a few.

Personally, I use a diet consisting of 65-70 percent fat, 15-20 percent protein, and 5-10 percent carbohydrates. The carbohydrates I eat come in the form of leafy green vegetables, and not through processed or starchy foods.

Eating this way for COPD patients is supported by science, and I have noticed many benefits from this. What you will not find is science to support the consumption of a high-carbohydrate diet for respiratory patients.

Unfortunately, in the world we live in the majority of people living in western cultures tend to eat high-carb diets.

What Does COPD Nutrition Look Like?

Eating a low carbohydrate – high-fat diet can be straightforward and satiating.

For example, a typical breakfast meal for me can be as simple as a couple of eggs with half an avocado. This contains 72 percent fat, 18 percent protein, and 10 percent carbohydrates in 370 calories.

For lunch, I like to eat smoked salmon, rocket, feta and avocado salad dressed with extra virgin olive oil. This contains 80 percent fat, 14 percent protein, and 6 percent carbohydrates in 580 calories.

Dinner can be an eye fillet steak with mushrooms, asparagus, and avocado salsa. 70 percent fat, 24 percent protein, and 6 percent carbohydrates in 900 calories.

As you can see you can still eat nutritious foods with plenty of calories while minimizing the consumption of carbohydrates.

While these types of foods are favorites of mine, they may not be to your liking. Don't be deterred, as there are many other alternative foods which will still keep you in the low carb and high-fat nutrition.

The Takeaway

There are a variety of recipes for eating low-carb and high-fat meals and many which require little preparation and cooking.

So, for those days when you need to eat but are lacking energy this way of eating can be very helpful. It doesn't get much more straightforward than boiling a couple of eggs and half an avocado.

It is important to consider the fact fats are more nutrient dense than carbohydrates, meaning you need to eat less

volume of fats as compared to carbohydrates to achieve the same number of calories.

Any dietary strategy should be carried out in conjunction with your doctor and a dietitian experienced in formulating this style of diet. While I have focused on the importance of limiting carbs, it is also vital you have adequate protein in your diet to help maintain muscle mass.

I am a firm believer there is no one diet fits all, however, I do believe the basis of restricting carbohydrates in a COPD patient’s diet can give dramatic improvements to their quality of life.