

# How to effectively nourish your body if you have a low appetite



## How do weight loss injections change your eating habits?

When you're using weight loss injections, it's likely that your appetite isn't going to be what it used to be. It's likely you'll feel more satisfied with smaller portions and feel less hungry between meals. This is because they target gut hormones that slow gastric emptying and areas of the brain associated with hunger. This can help you achieve a calorie deficit and lead to weight loss.

## What should you eat while on weight loss injections?

You'll most likely be eating less, therefore prioritise foods that are nutrient rich. Here are some top tips to keep in mind:

- **Eat lean protein.** When losing weight, you're also at risk of losing lean muscle mass along with fat mass. Eating protein containing foods is important for the growth and repair of our muscles. Include:
  - Chicken breast
  - Fish (try to include one portion of oily fish per week)
  - Eggs
  - Tofu
  - Edamame
  - Dairy like Greek yogurt, cheese, milk and cottage cheese.
  - Red meat like beef and lamb can also be included but try to have these less often than the other options listed.

Processed meat like bacon, sausage and chorizo is not an ideal protein source as they are high in saturated fat and salt. Processed meat should be avoided or kept minimal.

- **Include a variety of fibre.** A possible side effect is constipation. Eating foods higher in fibre can help overcome this issue. Try to combine fibre-rich food with every meal and snack. For example:
  - Wholegrain bread over white,
  - Fruit and vegetables (or both) with every meal.
  - Snacks - almonds, walnuts, cashews, oatcakes, falafel, humous with vegetable sticks, wholegrain crackers with nut butter.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Another key step to avoiding constipation. Aim for 6-8 mugs or glasses per day. Water is your optimum form of hydration, however tea, coffee, no added sugar cordial all count. Try to avoid sugar sweetened beverages as this adds unnecessary calories. Remember there are times when you'll need more fluid, especially if you are in a warmer environment or active and sweating.

## What foods should you avoid when taking weight loss injections?

There aren't really any foods you need to completely avoid. However, if you're experiencing side effects like nausea and acid reflux, you might want to limit foods that don't help you feel your best. For one person, that might be anything spicy, while for someone else it might be carbonated beverages.

A common culprit for triggering side effects is foods that are high in fats, even the healthier ones. Fats take longer to digest, which can worsen side effects, or make you feel too full for too long. Pay attention to what you've eaten recently to see if there's a common food that tends to make your side effects worse. A good way of monitoring this is to keep a food diary and note any symptoms at the same time. This can help you to recognise culprit foods.

### Key points

- Weight loss injections can reduce your appetite significantly, which means you'll likely eat less food than you used to.
- It's important you prioritise all the key nutrients you need so that you feel good, and your health is not compromised. Eating an unvaried diet can lead to other complications such as nutritional deficiency.
- At mealtimes aim to have some wholegrain carbohydrates, lean protein and sources of vegetables in a portion that suits you.
- Traditionally, some people have three meals per day; however, this may no longer be possible. You may want to consider having several small meals spaced evenly over a day to meet your nutritional needs. If you are concerned about your nutritional intake and need more advice speak with a registered dietitian.

For more information on what constitutes a balanced diet see our factsheet on 'how to achieve a balanced and healthy diet'.

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