

## 6. Eating and Appetite

As many as 1 in 4 people with cancer suffer with loss of appetite or difficulty with eating. This can be a result of the cancer itself, such as a tumour blocking the throat or gullet, or the side effects of treatment e.g. nausea, taste changes, sore mouth, diarrhoea, constipation and food aversions. Loss of appetite can also be a feature of depression and exhaustion. In addition, the loss of appetite or difficulty in eating can affect social activities.

### How can I manage my loss of appetite or difficulty in eating?

- Many people find it easier to have small frequent snacks throughout the day rather than sticking to three meals a day.
- Try to eat when your appetite is at its best. For many patients this is in the morning – why not try a cooked breakfast or porridge?
- You may need to change the balance of your diet to try and maximise your calorie and protein intake. For example, choose full-fat foods wherever possible, such as those labelled 'luxury' or 'thick and creamy' rather than 'light', 'diet' or 'low fat'.
- Eat well on the good days to make up for those days when your appetite is poorer.
- If swallowing is difficult try using nourishing drinks such as milkshakes or smoothies. Ask your doctor, nurse or dietician for information on high energy, prescribable drinks.
- Ensure mealtimes are relaxed and not distracted with any other activity.
- If possible ask someone else to prepare your food so that you are not too tired to eat it.
- If you are experiencing problems with feeding tubes you should call your local dietician, nutrition nurse or community nurse.
- If the issue is related to nausea, taste changes or sore mouth there is further advice elsewhere in this directory.
- Your appetite can be affected if you are tired, feeling sad or anxious. It is important to address these issues and there is advice elsewhere in this directory.

## Local Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
<p><b>Dietician Help and Advice</b> Help and advice on any dietary concerns you may have is available in the Mustard Tree with a Macmillan dietician.</p>	<p><b>Macmillan Dietician:</b> 01752 432247 <b>Mustard Tree Macmillan Centre:</b> 01752 430060 <b>Monday afternoon 13:30 – 16:30</b> Please ask your CNS or a member of staff in the Centre to arrange an appointment for you.</p>
<p><b>Mustard Tree Cancer Support &amp; Triangle Drop In Centres</b> Ask questions, share concerns, offers a range of services including benefits advice. Support, advice and information for cancer patients and their carers</p>	<p><b>Mustard Tree, Derriford Hospital:</b> Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm 01752 430060/01752 431468 <b>Kingsbridge:</b> Tuesdays 10am to 4pm 01548 852349 <b>Liskeard:</b> Thursdays 10am to 4pm 01579 373500 <b>Tavistock:</b> Fridays 10am to 4pm 01822 615935</p>
<p><b>Livewell South West: Managing Anxiety</b> This one hour workshop provides information on the psychological and physical symptoms of anxiety and strategies to manage this including breathing, goal setting and cognitive behaviour therapy <b>Managing Low Mood</b> This one hour workshop provides information on the psychological symptoms of low mood as well as providing strategies to manage this <b>Managing Stress</b> This one hour workshop introduces the symptoms of stress and how the body responds, and provides simple strategies to manage this</p>	<p><b>Livewell South West:</b> To book a place on any of the 1 hour workshops please call: Tel: 01752 435419 or Email: plymouthoptions@nhs.net</p>
<p><b>Wiltshire Farm Foods</b> Large selection of frozen meals can be ordered (online or telephone) and delivered straight to your front door</p>	<p><b>Wiltshire Farm Foods</b> <b>Website:</b> www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) <b>Tel:</b> 0800 0663366</p>
<p><b>Oakhouse Foods</b> Meals and groceries that can be ordered online or over the telephone and delivered directly to your door</p>	<p><b>Oakhouse Foods</b> <b>Website:</b> www.oakhousefoods.co.uk <b>Tel:</b> 0333 3702514</p>
<p><b>Other Resources</b></p>	<p>Your GP, Oncology Doctor, Specialist Nurse, District Nurse or Dietician.</p>

## National Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
<p><b>Macmillan Cancer Support</b></p> <p><b>Appetite</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Livingwithandaftercancer/Eatingwell/Eatingwell.aspx">http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Livingwithandaftercancer/Eatingwell/Eatingwell.aspx</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/eating-problems/appetite.html">http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/eating-problems/appetite.html</a></p>
<p><b>The Royal Marsden Hospital</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/cancer-information/living/pages/eating-well.aspx">www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/cancer-information/living/pages/eating-well.aspx</a></p>
<p><b>Macmillan Cancer Support</b> Provide comprehensive advice and information on all aspects of cancer.</p>	<p>www.macmillan.org.uk <b>0808 808 0000</b> (Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm)</p>

**Further information:**

<b>Macmillan Cancer Support booklets:</b> – available free from the Mustard Tree Macmillan Centre	<b>Marie Curie Leaflets:</b> available free from <a href="http://www.mariecurie.org.uk">www.mariecurie.org.uk</a>
Recipes for people affected by cancer	Loss of appetite
Controlling the symptoms of cancer	
The Building up diet	
How are you feeling?	
Healthy Eating and Cancer	
Understanding chemotherapy	
Understanding radiotherapy	
Eating Problems and Cancer	