



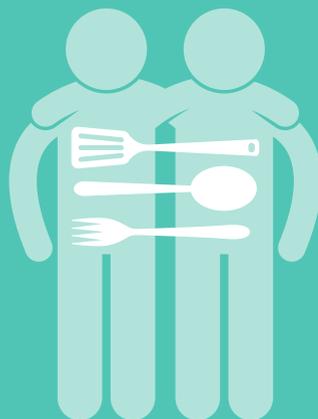
Quick Tips

Reduced appetite

Some people find that their appetite reduces as they get older. This can be a natural part of aging, as people tend to be less physically active and so need fewer calories. However, if our appetite is too small, it can make us tired, lose weight and not feel well. It is not good when this continues.

There can be many reasons why someone's appetite reduces. Some can affect any of us and some are specific to illnesses such as dementia - people living with dementia and their carers often find that a reduced appetite is a problem.

These tips cover some frequent causes of reduced appetite and things that have worked for other people.



Things to try in any situation

Using all our senses. When we are eating, we engage all 5 senses at the same time: taste, sight, hearing, touch and smell. If one of the senses is dulled or not working properly, it affects how we perceive the taste of the food we're eating.

- Having colourful food with different textures can help.
- Try adding a little bit of butter or olive oil to make food glossy.
- Try adding garnishes that give extra crunch and texture.
- Try a small sprinkling of sugar on savoury foods, just to get you started.
- Try foods that have distinctive smell that this person likes.

Get enough calories from small portions. If someone's appetite is really small, you want to get a good amount of energy from a small amount of food.

- Several small meals or snacks through the day can be easier to enjoy.
- It can help to have high calorie foods, such as full fat milk and butter or nuts.
- Try drinks like smoothies, as they can have good food content too.
- In some cases, a dietician can prescribe oral nutritional supplements, such as fortified drinks. They can be mixed in with your regular food.

Not getting enough exercise

The less active we are, the less food we need. Being active and especially being outside gives us an appetite.

- Aiming to be a little more active everyday can make a difference.
- Get some fresh air – going for a short walk round the garden or down the path, or sitting by an open window will help.
- Talk to a Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist if you are worried about someone falling if they are more active, as they can give good advice.

Changes to sense of smell and taste

As we get older our senses become less acute. Lots of health problems, such as having a cold or chest infection, will affect our sense of smell. Dementia can affect the senses and as a result food may not smell or taste the same to that person as it used to.

- Don't worry about foods not tasting the same. See it as an opportunity to try new foods and find what you do like.
- Try adding spices to the food to give it a stronger taste.
- Making meals colourful can also help as we eat with our eyes too!

Feeling low or depressed

Many aspects of not-so-good mental wellbeing and conditions such as depression and anxiety can make people uninterested in food or worried about eating.

- Speak to your GP as they will be able to tell you about a range of ways to improve your mental health and wellbeing.
- Spend time with other people and try to eat with them at least a few times each week.

- Getting fresh air and exercise and doing activities you enjoy are all good for your mental wellbeing and will help you have more of an appetite.

Having a painful mouth

We all need to be able to chew our food and a sore mouth, toothache or poorly fitted dentures may make eating painful. Missing teeth and not wearing dentures may also discourage someone from eating.

- People found that preparing foods so they aren't hard to chew or swallow or cutting the food into bite sized pieces helped.
- A dentist will be able to give you advice regarding teeth or dentures.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about mouth ulcers or anything that makes your mouth sore.

Chronic illness and medication

Some illness and/or medicines interact with food in a way that makes people not want to eat.

- Think about what has changed or is difficult – is

it when you eat at certain times, or do you find some food tastes odd? Keep a food diary for a few days, as that may help you work it out. Once you know what the problem is, it is easier to find ways to adjust to it.

- Some medicines make us constipated, and that reduces our appetite too. Try being more active, eating foods that are rich in fibre and drinking plenty of fluids.
- Speak to your GP as they may be able to change your medication to an alternative with fewer of the side effects that bother you.
- Ask about different combinations/timings of medication to lessen the side effects.

Being tired or worrying about things

We often don't feel like eating when we are too tired, or when we have something on our minds. And when we don't eat much it becomes even harder to have the energy to find a solution.

- If you are caring for someone, including someone with a reduced

appetite or other food difficulties, remember to take care of yourself! You need to be well and have energy to look after others.

- Being tired can be a symptom of health problems, so check this out with your GP.
- If you are worried about anything, speak to your friends and family or your GP. Try to find a way of making life a bit easier even if you cannot solve the problem.
- Eat with a friend. It can be something you do each week so it is something to look forward to.
- Ask someone else to do the cooking, or find foods that don't need much effort, even just for a short while until you are feeling better.
- Pamper yourself. Try the foods that you really like and don't worry about sensible diets for a short while.

Food Buddies Quick Tips

Food Buddies develops practical help for older people, people living with dementia and other people who sometimes have problems around food. We are trying to make life easier for people, staying safe and continuing to shop, cook and enjoy food.

This guide has been brought together with older people and their friends and families who are sharing their experience to help other people. We hope it is also useful for volunteers and staff who support people.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us develop our Quick Tips.

Food Buddies is a project based at Outside the Box.

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For further information about Food Buddies, more tips and other useful sources of information, visit our website: www.otbds.org/projects/food-buddies