

DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR PATIENTS WITH ALS

Good nutrition is always important, but a proper diet is essential for anyone who has an existing health condition. Though no special diet exists for people with ALS, the goal should be to achieve good nutrition and maintain body weight.

People with ALS may experience a number of roadblocks to good nutrition, including fatigue, decreased appetite, problems chewing, or difficulty swallowing. As a result, their bodies may not be receiving the nutrients they need. A well-balanced diet will include proper amounts of:

- Meats and alternatives (for protein)
- Milk
- Fruits and vegetables
- Grains

Aside from maintaining a well-balanced diet, people with ALS need to be mindful of the calories they consume. It is important to eat enough calories to maintain weight and prevent the body from breaking down its own muscle and fat for energy. Maintaining body weight will become difficult in later stages of ALS, so it is essential to keep it up for as long as possible.

Diet Changes for Easier Swallowing

Because of weakened muscles in the tongue and throat, people with ALS often have [difficulty chewing and swallowing](#) food (although 30% have no problems chewing or swallowing). While there are a variety of things patients can do to help improve chewing and swallowing, being mindful of one's diet is important too.

Although it may sound strange, thick liquids may be easier to swallow than thin liquids. Thick liquids spread out less in the throat and are less likely to go down the airway. Thick liquids include:

- Milkshakes
- Fruit smoothies
- Thick soups
- Yogurt

These have the consistency of fruit nectar and can be prepared in a variety of ways. Likewise, soft, moist foods (like eggs, fish, and mashed potatoes) are less tiring to chew and slide down the throat easily.

Avoid dry, sticky and fibrous foods. They are difficult to chew and may get stuck in the throat. Anything with skins or seeds should also be avoided.

Dietary Information from

<http://www.alsa.org/assets/pdfs/brochures/nutrition.pdf>