



## Nine Ways to Get Someone to Eat

From an article originally by Jennifer B. Buckley

A common nutritional problem that can affect care receivers is cachexia-anorexia. It is a syndrome causing progressive and involuntary weight loss. It especially affects those in advanced stages of Alzheimer's, Cancer and AIDS. Those with this problem are "wasting-away" from the lack of vitamins and nutrients. As a caregiver, this is difficult and frustrating to witness.

The problem can be attributed to cancer treatments, medications, physical problems like an obstructing tumor or psychological problems, like depression. It is also possible your loved one has simply lost appetite from not feeling well.

If you are having trouble getting your loved one to eat, try these ideas:

**Water, Water, Water.** Make sure the person you are caring for has plenty of water. This will avoid dehydration, which can lead to appetite suppression.

**Keep it small.** Instead of three regular sized meals a day, which can look overwhelming to someone in poor health, serve six small meals a day.

**Bulk up** on the amount of calories per meal. For instance, you can add protein powder mix to shakes or drinks to increase calories. Adding supplements like Ensure and Boost are also good ways to be sure your loved one is getting needed nutrients.

**Soft is better.** Serve soft foods such as pudding, ice cream or fruit smoothies because they can be tasty and easy to digest.

**Make it tasty.** Don't serve bland or sour tasting foods.

**Put the power in their hands.** When possible, give the person you are caring for the decision-making power to decide what they would like to eat; it helps to make your own choices.

**Make it pretty.** Present appetizing looking meals by accenting the plate with a garnish, such as a strawberry or melon slice. Make the dining experience pleasant for the person you are caring for by playing soft music or talking to them about the day's events while they are eating to take their mind off not feeling well.

**Write it down.** Keep a food diary about your loved one's eating and include what food they have problems or complications digesting and their daily menus. Review it with their doctor or dietician for feedback. They may be experiencing digestive problems or irritable bowel syndrome due to their menu.

**Work it out.** Try to get them moving to work up an appetite. If overall exercise such as walking isn't possible, have them fold the laundry, peel vegetables, or some other helpful tasks that can be accomplished with limited exertion.