

# Anorexia and Wasting

## What is Anorexia?

Loss of appetite, especially as a result of disease. It can be caused by some medications, depression, infection, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, shortness of breath, fatigue, or neurologic disease.

## What is Wasting?

Wasting is the involuntary loss of more than 10% of regular body weight, plus either chronic diarrhea or chronic weakness, and documented fever in the absence of another illness.

Factors that contribute to wasting are: lack of adequate intake, malabsorption, metabolic irregularities, opportunistic infections, and lack of physical activity.

## Symptoms

- Loss of weight
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue and malaise
- Diarrhea
- Fever

## To Combat Anorexia and Wasting

- Work closely with a Registered Dietitian and your Health Care Provider.
- Have your body composition measured early and often in order to know how much of your weight is composed of muscle and how much is composed of fat. This can be done by Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis (BIA).
- Ask your doctor about medications that increase appetite.

- Resistance exercise training can increase lean body mass, and any exercise in general increases appetite. However, some types of exercise promote weight loss. So, always consult your doctor before beginning any exercise. They can help you choose a regimen that works for you.
- Certain steroid and hormone treatments can aid in preventing and treating wasting. If you have any questions about these therapies, talk to your doctor. Only your doctor can prescribe these treatments.

## Tips for Gaining Weight

- A reasonable goal is to try and get back to your own healthy weight.
- Eat small frequent meals, add snacks between meals.
- Keep your favorite foods within reach, such as near the bed, couch, or chair.
- Choose foods that don't have a strong smell.
- Avoid stress before and during a meal.
- Eat in a pleasant place: light a candle, put flowers on the table, or eat with a friend.
- Drink a nutritional supplement (talk to your dietitian or healthcare provider about which is best for you) in addition to eating.
- Do light exercise, such as a short walk with a friend, before you eat to stimulate your appetite.