

Eating and drinking with metastatic disease

Bowel cancer that has spread to other parts of the body is known as metastatic disease. These deposits of bowel cancer cells can start to grow and develop in the pelvis and abdomen, close to the site of the original bowel tumour. Bowel cancer cells can also break off the original tumour and be carried via the lymphatic system and blood stream to other, more distant parts of the body, including the liver and the lungs.

Bowel cancer metastases can create a number of extra challenges if you are trying to maintain a good quality of life, but there are things you can do to maintain a balanced diet and ensure that you are drinking enough fluids every day.

Eating and drinking with liver metastases

The liver is a major processing organ in your body. It lies on the right hand side of your abdomen, tucked up underneath your ribcage. It does many different jobs including making bile (used to digest fats and oils in your diet); filtering many nutrients, hormones and medicines out of your blood stream, using them up and getting rid of waste products.



Metastatic disease

Swelling within the liver can sometimes block the flow of bile and other digestive enzymes from the liver into the small intestine. If this happens you may experience symptoms of an intense colic/cramp, pain in your upper abdomen/back/shoulder on the right hand side - one that typically comes on at night or after eating a large meal.

When the liver is affected by metastases, the increased pressure caused by these tumours can also cause pain or discomfort which can be difficult to relieve. The cancer cells release a fluid that can irritate the surrounding area so that it also becomes swollen and inflamed.

If your liver becomes swollen, it can also cause an upwards pressure on to the stomach or down onto the bowel so that you begin to feel full very quickly or you just don't feel hungry at all. You may also experience problems with nausea, regurgitation or a reflux of acid or food up into your oesophagus (gullet).

Eating and drinking with lung metastases

Lung metastases can cause irritation and swelling in the healthy tissue around them. This may lead to a collection of fluid in the bottom of the lung, breathlessness and/or a persistent cough (with or without mucus). These symptoms can make your mouth dry, affecting both your appetite and how well you are able to chew your food.

The inflammation in your lungs can sometimes also lead to swelling in the lymph nodes near to the tumours in your chest. These can become painful. They can also sometimes grow large enough to press onto the oesophagus. If this happens, it can create other problems with swallowing food and medicines properly.



What to do if you notice any of these symptoms

If you recognise any of these symptoms, it is important to discuss it with your specialist hospital team or your GP as soon as you can. They will examine you and can order any tests you might need to investigate the problems and relieve the symptoms for you.

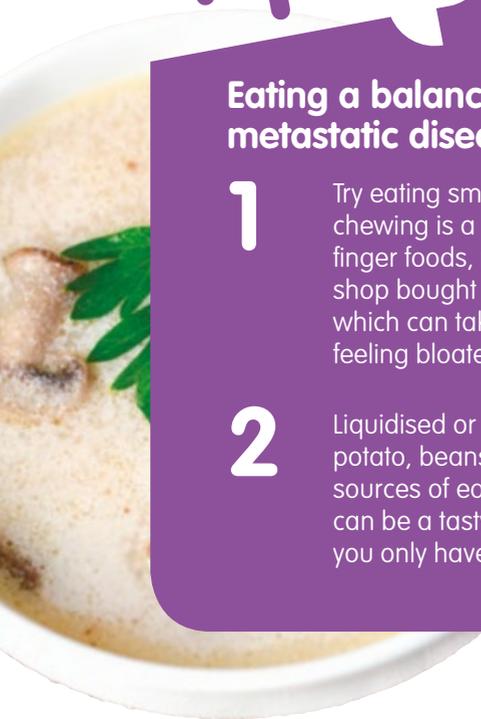
To maintain a good, balanced diet, it is important to find ways of taking in enough food and fluids to prevent further complications or difficulties developing.

There are also a range of medications which can be prescribed to help support your appetite and digestion, and relieve any symptoms of pain and discomfort you may have.

tips

Eating a balanced diet with metastatic disease

- 1 Try eating smaller portions of soft, moist foods if chewing is a problem. Choose light, easy to eat finger foods, nutritious snacks and homemade or shop bought drinks in preference to larger meals which can take longer to eat and digest if you are feeling bloated
- 2 Liquidised or pureed vegetable broths with extra potato, beans, pasta, rice or noodles are great sources of easy to digest energy. Creamy soups can be a tasty alternative to a larger main meal if you only have a small appetite



tips

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3 Small portions of fruit jellies, ice creams or fromage frais with an extra portion of fruit sauce can be a tasty snack

4 Ice chips, ice lollies, slices of citrus fruits and small, soft, juicy berries are easy to eat and help to clean the palate

5 Soft boiled, poached or scrambled eggs and poached or baked fish can make delicious alternatives to meat-based meals

6 Mashed potatoes are great with butter, cheese, garlic or a spoonful of horseradish sauce; try them with mustard and softly sautéed leeks

7 Serve mashed root vegetables and baked sweet potato together or mix mashed potato or some feta cheese as an alternative, low fat pie topping

8 Don't forget that you can make larger batches of favourite meals and freeze some as individual portions for later



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