

# Special Diets—Do I Still Need One?

If you have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure, your healthcare team may have started you on a special diet.

At times, a special diet may affect how much you eat or the foods you eat. Not eating or drinking enough can lead to poor nutrition. This may cause health problems like weak muscles, weight loss, and dehydration. Weight loss and poor nutrition can also lead to falls, no matter your shape or size.



**Talk to your healthcare team about changing your special diet if you are not eating well.**

Here are some topics to talk to your healthcare team about:

- Do I need a special diet if my health condition is well managed?
- Are there medication changes that could be made so that I don't need a special diet anymore?
- Is eating a wider variety of foods to prevent poor nutrition and weight loss, more important than the special diet?
- Am I still enjoying the foods offered to me on my special diet?

**Are you on a pureed, minced, or dysphagia soft diet or using thickened fluids for chewing or swallowing issues?**

If you are on a special diet to help you swallow safely, speak to a dietitian, speech language pathologist, or occupational therapist before changing your diet.

## Not eating well?

- Try some different or new foods as your tastes may change over time.
- Have snacks or drinks between meals.
- Try to eat higher calorie or higher protein foods first. Ask your dietitian for tips.
- Ask for help at meals. This includes help with: cutting foods, opening packages, eating, or getting softer foods. Family or friends can bring foods you enjoy.
- Keep ready-to-eat food and drinks nearby. Ideas include: nut butters, cheese sticks, crackers, fruit cups, milk, nutrition supplement drinks (such as Ensure® or Boost®), or ready-to-eat meals.

## For more information

Your dietitian may also suggest other handouts for improving your food intake at [ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts](https://ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts).

