Introduction
Mesothelioma can affect the inner lining of the chest wall (known as pleural mesothelioma) and also the lining of the gut (known as peritoneal mesothelioma). Peritoneal mesothelioma is a much less common form of the disease. There is approximately one case of peritoneal mesothelioma to every 12 cases of pleural mesothelioma. Both forms of the disease can cause problems with eating.

Why?
Abdominal Bloating
This can be a very early and common problem for people who have mesothelioma. This can also happen after surgery. It is unclear why this problem occurs, but it may be due to changes in the muscle that separates the chest from the gut (the diaphragm). Some people find that they don’t feel hungry or that they feel full soon after they start eating and are unable to finish their meals.

For those with peritoneal mesothelioma this can be due to a build up of fluid in the abdomen.

Loss of appetite
It is very common for people with mesothelioma to experience a loss of appetite at some point. This can be due to the drug treatment, e.g. chemotherapy, worry or anxiety or the Effect of the cancer on the body or any combination of these.

Eating well helps you to avoid losing weight, and helps your body re-build damaged tissues, fight infection, and cope with the side effects of treatment.

This leaflet aims to give you information and support if you have difficulties with eating or maintaining your weight due to either form of the disease. It is also for those of you who care for someone with this problem.

Healthy Eating
Many people feel tired and experience a lack of energy in the early stages of the disease. Their appetite may still be very good and there can be a tendency to put on weight. It is important to try to eat healthily to prevent excess weight gain.

Eating a healthy diet is based on a balance of foods consumed within 5 food groups. Consuming a wide range of foods will help you to obtain a wide range of nutrients required to keep your body functioning properly. Foods high in fat and sugar are not essential to a healthy diet, but add choice and taste. They can also help to increase your calorie intake if you are finding it difficult to eat and are losing weight.

Protein
Includes meat, fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs, nuts, beans, pulses, soya, tofu and myco protein (QuornTM). Aim to eat 2 servings per day.

A serving is:
• A piece of meat/fish about the same size as the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.
• 3 average-sized rashers of bacon or slices of ham, or a quarter-pounder beef burger.
• 3 heaped tablespoons of beans or lentils.
• 2 eggs.

Carbohydrates/starchy foods
This group includes:
• Rice, pasta, noodles, couscous, bulgur wheat, millet, sorghum, quinoa, commeal, oats, barley and rye.
• Bread and bread products including rolls, pitta, focaccia, chapattis, bagels, baguette, ciabatta, pizza base, roti and tortillas.
• Potatoes and potato products (including baked, boiled and mashed potatoes, oven chips and potato gnocchi).
• Yams, cassava and plantain.
Try to include a starchy food at every meal such as potatoes, breads, pasta, rice, noodles or cereals. Approximately 1/3 of our total food intake should come from this group.

High fibre or wholegrain varieties usually contain more fibre, vitamins and minerals than refined versions. You could try a baked potato with skin on, wholegrain breakfast cereal, wholemeal bread, wholewheat couscous or try wholewheat spaghetti with your bolognese.

**Fruits and vegetables**
Different coloured fruits and vegetables contain different nutrients. Fresh, frozen, tinned and dried versions all count. Try to eat at least 5 portions from a variety of fruits and vegetables.

A portion is:
- 1 medium sized piece of fruit such as a banana, apple, pear, orange or nectarine or
- A large handful of berries, cherries or grapes, or
- 1 heaped tablespoon of dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries or sultanas (you only need 30g of dried fruit because the portion size is based on the weight of the fresh fruit), or
- 1 dessert bowl of salad, or
- 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables or pulses (beans, lentils, chick peas).
- 150 ml glass of 100% fruit or vegetable juice.

**Milk and dairy/alternatives**
Includes milk, yoghurt, fromage fraise, cheese, quark, rice/ nut/soya milk and yoghurt alternatives. Try to choose 2-3 servings per day.

A serving is:
- 150g pot of yogurt.
- 30g cheese.

• 200mls cows milk or calcium fortified alternative.

**Foods high in fat; foods and drinks high in containing sugar**
This group includes cakes, sugary drinks, biscuits, chocolate, sweets, puddings, pastries, ice cream, jam, honey, crisps, butter, margarine & spreads, oil, cream, mayonnaise.

These foods can be eaten in small amounts as part of a healthy varied diet. Cutting down on these types of food could help you control your weight because they often contain lots of calories.

**Not eating well?**
If you are not eating as well as you would normally, the following tips may help you to eat more.

**Eat “little and often”**
Try to include snacks between meals and before bed. Keeping snacks at easy reach may help you to eat more often. Overleaf are some snack ideas:
Mesothelioma and Diet

**Biscuits, cakes and fun sized chocolate bars**

- Sandwiches with fillings such as: cheese, meat, fish and nut butters
- Small pieces of pizza, fian, sausage rolls, scotch eggs & cocktail sausages

**Fruit (fresh and dried) with cream or custard**

- Crackers with cheese or pâté, cheese straws or cubes
- Bhajis, pakoras, spring rolls, halva, Bombay mix

**Ready-made desserts such as yoghurt, crème caramel, trifle, mousse, cheesecakes**

- Crisps, nuts, olives, savoury biscuits, bread sticks with houmous or dips
- Crumpets, scones, bagels, muffins, croissants, toast, breakfast cereal

- Avoid filling yourself up with large servings of vegetables, salads, water and fizzy drinks. They provide fibre and bulk, but little energy.

- Sometimes the smell of food will be appetising while at other times it may put you off. If this happens, try to keep away from the kitchen while food is being prepared, or eat cold foods, which often smell less.

- Avoid drinking with meals as this may fill you up and spoil your appetite.

**Fortify your food**

- If you are only eating small portions the following tips may help you to get more calories without necessarily having to eat more food.

  - Start by buying full fat foods. Avoid "light" or "diet" versions of foods. These are not appropriate for you at the moment.
  
  - If you have a freezer, try to prepare food in advance when you feel like cooking and store it for when you are not feeling so well.

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- Be positive about what you do eat – every extra mouthful helps.

- Try not to get out of the habit of eating. You actually need to eat to stimulate your appetite by eating regularly.

- Make the most of the times you feel like eating.

- Don’t worry if it isn’t ‘normal’ foods at ‘normal’ times – if you fancy cereal at midnight, enjoy it!

- A short walk before a meal or some fresh air may help give you an appetite.

- A small glass of wine, beer, sherry or your favourite drink taken 30 minutes before a meal may boost your appetite. Check with your doctor first.

- Experiment with different foods. You may find that you like things you don’t usually eat.

- Accept offers from friends and relatives to help with cooking and shopping.

- Convenience foods are a useful standby and can be just as nourishing.

- Fortified Milk: Add 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder such as Marvel or or a supermarket own brand to 1 pint of full cream milk. This can be used in the usual way in drinks, on cereals, in sauces and puddings.

*To savoury foods add cheese, fortified milk, gravy, milk powder, pulses, meat, fish, eggs, cream, crème fraîche, pesto, olive/vegetable oils or butter/margarine (not low fat spread)*

For example:

- Add meat, fish, beans or pulses to soups and casseroles.

- Cheese on mashed potato with milk, milk powder and butter/margarine/olive oil.

- Oils, margarine/butter, cheese or white sauce on vegetables.

- Add 2 tablespoons of milk powder to a portion of white sauce.

- Add grated cheese/cream/milk or crème fraîche to soup.
• Add cream/sour cream or crème fraîche to casseroles.
• Add mayonnaise/ salad cream or pesto to sandwiches or have 2 fillings, such as: egg mayonnaise and bacon or cheese and ham.

To sweet foods add fortified milk, sugar, cream, honey, syrup, ice cream, jam, glucose powder, condensed milk, or evaporated milk. Be aware that sweet/sugary foods may cause tooth decay and may not be advisable if you have diabetes. If you have any questions regarding this please discuss it with your dietitian.

For example:
• Cream/custard/ice cream/ evaporated milk with pies, sponge or fruit.
• Add extra sugar, honey or syrup to desserts and cereals.
• Make jelly with fortified milk, instead of water.

• Add 2 tablespoons of milk powder to a portion of porridge, milk puddings and custard.
• Add cream, yoghurt, sugar, honey, evaporated milk, dried fruit to breakfast cereals.

**Ideas for nourishing drinks:**

**Fortified milk:**
Add 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder to 1 pint of full cream milk. **Use fortified milk to make up:**

**Hot milk drinks:**
Ovaltine, Horlicks, Bournvita, hot chocolate (avoid low calorie types). Milky coffee, latte, cappucino. Double cream can be added to a hot milky drink.

**Cold milk drinks:**
Milk shakes made with cordials, fruit juice, milkshake syrup or powder. Add a scoop of ice cream for extra nourishment. Fruit smoothie: blend fruit, for example: banana with milk plus ice cream/yoghurt, nut butters and honey or malt.

**Savoury milk drinks:**
Instant soups.
Bovril or Marmite.

**Yoghurt Drinks:**
Can be purchased, or yoghurts can be diluted with milk to make yoghurt shakes.

**Fruit juice and fizzy drinks:**
Fruit juice – fresh or long life. Fruit juice mixed with fizzy drinks, for example lemonade are refreshing.

Fizzy drinks, for example Lucozade, Appletize, Schloer, lemonade, Coca Cola, tonic water. Try to avoid ‘low calorie’ and ‘diet’ options.

**Ice cream soda:**
Can be made by adding ice cream to a fizzy drink.

**Alcohol:**
A small glass of wine, beer, sherry or your favourite drink taken 30 minutes before a meal may boost your appetite. Check with your doctor first.

**Recipes for Nourishing Drinks**

**Hot drink ideas:**

- Honey and lemon cup
  Calories per drink: 290
  • 1/3 pint of fortified milk.
  • 2 dessert spoons of clear honey.
  • Dash of lemon juice.
  Heat the milk with the honey. Remove from the heat and add the lemon juice. Serve immediately.

- Chocolate mallow
  Calories per drink: 395
  • 1/3 pint of fortified milk.
  • 1 tablespoon of drinking chocolate.
  • 2 teaspoons of sugar.
  • 4 marshmallows.
  • 1 tablespoon of rum if desired.
  Blend together the drinking chocolate and sugar with a little milk. Heat the remaining milk with 2 marshmallows. Add to chocolate with rum if using. Float remaining marshmallows on top.

- Fortified milk:
  Add 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder to 1 pint of full cream milk.
  Use fortified milk to make up:
  Hot milk drinks:
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  Cold milk drinks:
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Cinnamon spics
Calories per drink: 260
- 1/3 pint of fortified milk.
- 1 tablespoon of golden syrup.
- Pinch of mixed spice.
- Pinch of ground cinnamon.

Heat milk. Stir in all the other ingredients. Serve hot.

Cold drink ideas:
Iced coffee
Calories per drink: 350
- 1/3 pint of fortified milk.
- 2 teaspoons of coffee powder.
- 2 teaspoons of sugar.
- 1 scoop of ice cream.

Dissolve coffee in a little hot milk. Add remaining milk, sugar and ice cream. Whisk and chill thoroughly.

Milk shake
Calories per drink: 315 - 390
- 1 glass of fortified milk.
- 1 scoop of ice cream.
- Flavouring, for example Crusha milk shake syrup, Ribena, coffee or drinking chocolate.

Tropical fruit crush
Calories per drink: 155 - 180
- 100 mls fruit juice.
- 100 mls lemonade, soda or sparkling mineral water.
- Small brick of ice cream (2oz).

Chill fruit juice and lemonade, or soda water and stir well to mix. Add ice cream.

Supplement drinks:
Nourishing powdered drinks:
Such as Complan and Meritene are available from most Chemists and Supermarkets. These are available in a variety of sweet and savoury flavours.

Nutritional supplement drinks:
There is a wide range of nutritional supplement drinks available on prescription. They can be stirred into your drinks to add energy and/or protein. Your dietitian will be able to advise you on their use. If you think these would be helpful please ask your dietitian for advice.

Hot soup ideas
Pea, Spinach and Mint Soup
Calories Per Portion 333kcal
Serves 4
- 1 onion peeled & roughly chopped.
- 1 clove garlic chopped.
- 2oz (60g) butter.
- 1 large potato, peeled and diced.
- 1 pint (600mls) vegetable or chicken stock bag
spinach washed.
- 6oz (175g) frozen peas.
- 2 carrots scrubbed and diced.
- Small bunch fresh mint finely chopped or 2 teaspoons dried mint.
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice.
- 2 tablespoons olive oil.
- Few parmesan shavings.
- Salt and pepper.

Energy and protein powders which can be added to drinks:
There are also flavourless powders available on prescription. They can be stirred into your drinks to add energy and/or protein. Your dietitian will be able to advise you on their use.
Banoffee Treat

Calories per drink 350kcal
- Small banana.
- 150ml fortified milk.
- 1 pot of crème caramel.
- 1 teaspoon of golden syrup.

Blend all ingredients together and serve immediately.

A high energy high protein meal plan may look something like this:

Breakfast
- Glass of fruit juice.
- Cereal with fortified milk and/or
- Bread, toast, bagel or croissant with butter, jam, marmalade, nut butters or honey.
- Egg, sausage, bacon, or beans.

Mid morning snack
- Fortified milk drink and/or
- Cake, biscuits, teacake, scone or crumpet with butter and jam and/or
- Biscuits or cheese and crackers.

Lunch
- Fortified soup with bread and butter or
- Toast with beans, cheese, egg, ravioli or tinned spaghetti or
- Sandwich with meat, cheese, fish or egg mayonnaise or
- Jacket potato with cheese, beans or tuna mayonnaise and
- Dessert: Yoghurt, mousse, whip, milk jelly, custard, trifle, milk pudding, sponge and custard or ice cream, tinned/stewed fruit with cream or ice cream.

Evening meal
- Meat, cheese, fish, eggs or pulses and
- Potato, rice, bread or pasta and
- Vegetables – add butter or grated cheese or
- Salad – add mayonnaise or salad cream and
- Dessert: As lunch

In a large pan, cook the onion in the butter until soft but not browned.

Add the potatoes, garlic, carrots and stock, and simmer until they are soft (approx 15-20mins).

When potatoes are almost cooked, add the spinach and peas. Simmer for a couple of minutes.

Mix mint and olive oil and lemon juice in a bowl.

Allow the soup to cool (to prevent scalding) before liquidising and season with salt and pepper.

Serve in bowls and drizzle with mint, lemon and oil mixture. Sprinkle with parmesan shavings.

Cold drink ideas

Peaches and cream Smoothie
Calories per drink: 180
- 1 tin peaches.
- 8fl oz (250mls) milk.
- 2fl oz (60mls) double cream.
- 1 scoop vanilla ice cream.

Blend all ingredients together and serve immediately.

Tropical Smoothie
Calories per drink 264kcal
- 4fl oz (125ml) coconut milk.
- 8fl oz (250mls) pineapple juice.
- 4 oz (125g) pineapple chunks.
- 1 mango peeled
- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream.

Blend all ingredients together and serve immediately.

Fruit Smoothie
Calories per drink 264kcal
- 150ml of carton orange juice.
- 1 mashed banana.
- 3-4 tbsp of tinned peaches (in syrup).
- 2 tsp of honey.

Blend all ingredients together and serve immediately.

Greek Cooler
Calories 484kcal
- 150g/5oz of Greek yoghurt.
- 2 tablespoons of honey.
- 50ml of fortified milk.

Blend all ingredients together and serve immediately.

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Bed-time snack
- Fortified milk drink and biscuits, crumpet or cake or cereal with fortified milk or sandwich or toast.

Change in taste
Change in taste is common with all cancers. In mesothelioma this can be due to the cancer itself or the side effects of treatment.

You may find that foods you previously enjoyed now taste unpleasant. Foods such as red meat or coffee can taste bitter while some people complain of a metallic taste. Others find everything tastes the same ‘like cardboard’, ‘a bit chemically’, very salty or very sweet. Some people may find that food does not taste of anything at all or doesn’t taste ‘normal’.

If you experience these problems, here are some tips to help make your food have more taste.
- Try to drink plenty of fluids and keep your mouth and tongue clean. This will give you the best chance to be able to taste your food.
  - Brush your teeth regularly after meals, and use a soft toothbrush to clean your tongue if necessary.
  - If your mouth is sore, ask your doctor to advise you on an appropriate mouthwash/medication to help. Rinsing your mouth with water or a weak salt solution (add 1sp of salt to 600ml/1 pint of water) may be helpful.
  - Eat the foods that you do like the taste of and avoid those that you don’t. Re-try any ‘problem’ foods after a few weeks as your taste may have returned to normal.
  - If sweet foods taste too sweet try a selection of savoury foods instead. Using stronger seasonings may help or try adding lemon juice.
  - Sharp tasting foods such as grapefruit, lemon, pineapple and drinks such as bitter lemon may help stimulate your taste buds, increase the flow of saliva and get rid of any unpleasant taste in your mouth.
- If meat tastes bitter or metallic try marinating it before cooking. For example: in fruit juice, wine, barbecue or sweet and sour sauce.
- If meat tastes unpleasant, don’t worry. Fish, milk, cheese, eggs and pulses such as lentils and beans can all provide the same nourishment as meat.
- If your tongue feels coated you can try pineapple juice or a small amount of fizzy drink to help clean your mouth.
- Avoid cooking in metallic containers and use plastic or wooden utensils.
- Some people find cold or warm foods easier to manage and more palatable than hot. Here are a few ideas that may help you:
  - Cold quiche.
  - Cold sliced turkey or chicken, or sardines, mackerel with bread and salad.
  - Vegetable tarts.
  - Sandwiches with fillings such as ham and cheese, smoked ham and mustard, cheese onion and mayonnaise, cheese and pickle, tuna with Mayonnaise and cucumber, egg or prawn with mayonnaise, smoked salmon and cheese, houmous, nut butters etc.
  - If tea and coffee taste strange, try alternative drinks such as; herbal tea, fruit tea, lemon or green tea.
  - Milky drinks such as hot chocolate, flavoured milk shakes, smoothies, lattes.
  - Fruit juices, cordials or fizzy drinks.
  - Flavoured or carbonated water.

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  - Fruit juices, cordials or fizzy drinks.
  - Flavoured or carbonated water.
If foods taste bland, try adding strong tasting herbs and spices, for example oregano, rosemary or sauces such as soya, worcester or barbecue.

Stronger or smoked versions of foods may also help; for example, strong cheddar cheese or smoked cheese, smoked ham, smoked salmon.

Try dropping a stock cube into the cooking water for potatoes, rice or pasta.

**Suggested flavourings**

Foods in bold type - if you have a sore mouth it may be best to avoid these foods as they could make your mouth more uncomfortable.

Beef: Add horseradish, tomato, beer, mustard, ginger, black pepper, bay leaf.

Chicken: Add natural or Greek yoghurt, garlic, orange/lemon juice, pesto, black bean sauce, thyme, tarragon, coconut, paprika.

Fish: Add black pepper, lemon juice, parsley, dill, coriander, paprika, almonds, coconut.

Pork: Add cider, ginger, garlic, rosemary, apple, sage, thyme, pineapple.

Lamb: Add mint, rosemary, basil, redcurrant, apricot.

Cheese: Add onion, pickle, piccalilli, chutney.

Potato: Add mint, parsley, onion, cheese.

Rice: Add turmeric, onion, pesto, stock, saffron, caraway seeds.

Peas: Add mint, parsley.

Carrots: Add parsley, orange, coriander, tarragon, cloves, caraway seeds.

**Tomato**: Add basil, oregano, marjoram.

Other ideas to add some flavour: *Sweet chilli dipping sauce,* brown sauce, tomato sauce, Salad cream, salad dressing, mayonnaise, seafood sauce, tartare sauce, tzatiki, vinegar, tahini (sesame seed paste).

**Difficulty in swallowing food**

Difficulty in swallowing food, known as dysphagia, can occur when the walls surrounding the gullet (oesophagus) become thickened or compresses due to the disease. This can narrow the food pipe and make swallowing more difficult. Following a softer diet may be easier to manage. The following advice and meal plan provides some tips on how to provide a soft diet, and gives some ideas for soft meals and snacks.

- Eating ‘little and often’ may be more manageable - aim for small frequent meals and snacks every 2 to 3 hours.
- Try using sauces, gravy, butter, cream or custard to soften foods.
- For example, have fish in sauce, fruit with cream, sponge with custard or cream.
- Soften foods by chopping, mincing or mashing.
- Small sips of drink with a meal can help to moisten your food.
- Meats should be well cooked and tender - try stewing, casseroling etc.
- Warm foods may be more soothing. Allow a piping hot meal or drink to cool before eating or drinking.
- Try to avoid foods that require a lot of chewing and are difficult to swallow. For example, tough gristly meat, raw vegetables and nuts.
- You may need to take nutritious drinks between your meals to supplement your intake. Your dietitian will advise you about this.
Menu ideas for meals and snacks

### Meat and poultry
- Shepherds pie, cottage pie, corned beef hash, meat loaf.
- Minced meats and gravy or sauce eg bolognaisé.
- Sausages (may be easier to manage if skinless).
- Tender meat or chicken in stews, hotpots or casseroles.
- Potted meat and pates.
- Chicken in a cream sauce.
- Moussaka.
- Lamb or chicken curry.

### Fish
- Flaked fish (without bones) in white/cheese/parsley sauce.
- Fisherman’s pie, fish mornay, fish and potato nests.
- Fish mousse or light pate.
- Tinned fish, for example tuna, salmon, sardines, pilchards – mixed with salad cream, mayonnaise or cheese sauce.
- Taramasalata.
- Fish paste.
- Fish curry.
- Prawns in sauce.

### Vegetarian Dishes
- Lentils or chick peas made into Dahl.
- Dips, such as houmous, guacamole, cream cheese.
- Ratatouille.

Eggs
- Serve scrambled, poached, boiled or as an omelette (add cheese if desired).
- Egg Mayonnaise.
- Egg dishes for example: sweet/savoury egg custard, soufflés.
- Whisk into milk puddings prior to cooking.

*Ensure that eggs are well cooked if receiving chemotherapy.*

### Pasta Dishes
- Lasagne, bolognaisé sauce over pasta.
- Macaroni cheese.
- Ravioli, tortellini, cannelloni with different sauces, such as cheese or tomato.
- Pasta in creamy sauce, for example carbonara.
- Savoury noodles.
- Tinned spaghetti with grated cheese.

### Potatoes and Vegetables
- Soft carrots, turnip, swede, cauliflower, marrow are easily mashable.
- Add extra butter/margarine.
- Add milk to mashed potatoes.
- Try adding grated cheese.
- Serve with a white/cheese sauce or gravy.
- Instant mashed potato is a quick alternative.
- Mash the inside of a jacket potato with butter and add a suitable filling.

### Desserts
- Sponge pudding with custard/cream/ice cream.
- Bread and butter or sticky toffee pudding with custard or cream.

### Snacks
- Full fat cream cheese or cheese spread.
- Dip biscuits in warm drinks to soften.

### Refs:
- [https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home](https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home)