



Irish Lung Fibrosis Association

Weight Management and Nutrition for Pulmonary Fibrosis



Weight Management and Nutrition for Pulmonary Fibrosis

Weight management can be difficult with Pulmonary Fibrosis (Lung Fibrosis) due to numerous limiting factors. Difficulty exercising, shortness of breath, increased appetite while on steroids, and lack of appetite can all act as barriers to achieving a healthy weight.

There is very strong evidence to show that achieving and maintaining a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) improves lung function. Individuals will differ, and while some people will be underweight and struggle to gain weight, others will be overweight and struggle to lose weight.

Overall, it is important to establish what your weight and BMI are and identify what you need to do in order to keep within a healthy range.

Consequences of Being Overweight and Obesity

Regardless of lung disease, by being overweight or obese, you have increased risk of the following diseases:

- *Type 2 diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease & stroke, metabolic syndrome, certain types of cancer, sleep apnoea, fatty liver disease and gallbladder disease.*

Specific to Lung Fibrosis, being overweight or obese puts your lungs under increased pressure and makes exercising more difficult. If you are being considered for lung transplant, excess weight can lower 5-year survival post transplant.

Consequences of Being Underweight

General problems associated with being underweight include:

- *Osteoporosis, infertility, anaemia and impaired immune system.*

A low BMI is associated with a decrease in lung function and may also affect mobility and ability to exercise due to muscle wasting.

What is BMI?

BMI (Body Mass Index) is a measurement which relates a person's weight to their height. It is used to classify underweight, overweight and obesity in adults. It is important for general health to achieve a normal BMI. If being considered for lung transplant, your BMI should be greater than 18.5kg/m² but less than 28kg/m². The following is the equation used to calculate BMI.

$$\text{BMI (kg/m}^2\text{)} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)}^2}$$

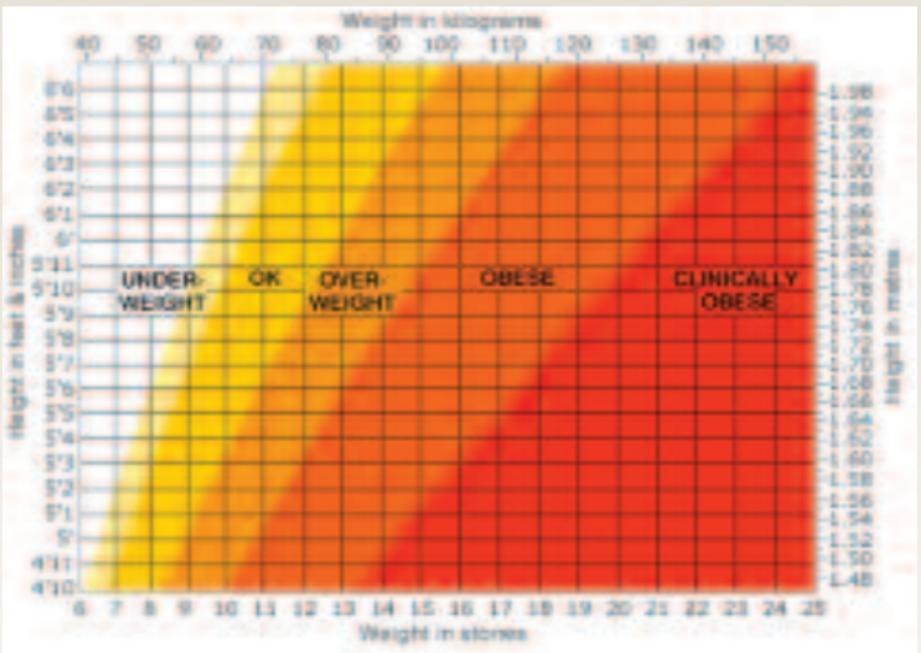
Example: 76kg (12stone), 1.68m (5ft 6")

$$\text{BMI (kg/m}^2\text{)} = \frac{76 \text{ (kg)}}{1.68 \text{ (m)}^2} = \mathbf{27\text{kg/m}^2}$$

The International Classification of adult underweight, overweight and obesity according to BMI

Classification	BMI (kg/m²)
Underweight	<18.50
Normal range	18.50 - 24.99
Overweight	>25.0
Obese	>30.0

Source: Adapted from World Health Organisation (WHO) 1995, (WHO) 2000 and (WHO) 2004.



BMI Graph

Trying to lose weight: **Motivation**

In order to lose weight successfully you need to be motivated and willing to plan your meals.

- Apart from a setting a weight target, set some other motivator e.g. An item of clothing you would like to fit into, a weekend away, etc.
- Get others involved. Family and friends can act as support and motivators for times when your willpower may slip.
- You need to set realistic goals.

Keep them SMART:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time based

Instead of vague goals you need to be SMART e.g. Replace "I will increase my exercise", with "I will cycle for 30mins 5 times a week"

*Trying to lose weight: **General advice***

The following are some general tips to consider when trying to achieve weight loss:

- Recognise that there is no 'Quick Fix'. In order to achieve and maintain weight loss, you need to change your lifestyle. Make sure these changes are realistic and sustainable.
- Plan your meals and exercise. Keeping a food and activity diary can highlight areas for change that you may not have realised.
- Don't skip meals. Have 3 meals per day using a wide variety of foods, using the food pyramid for guidance.
- Identify your food triggers and plan how to avoid them e.g. Getting a take-away when too tired to cook. Instead, make some extra portions/meals when cooking and freeze them for times when you are tired.

*Trying to lose weight: **Portion sizes***

- Use a smaller plate for your meals.
- Make sure at least 1/3 of your plate is filled with vegetables or salad.
- Eat a piece of raw fruit or vegetables before your lunch and dinner. A bowl of homemade vegetable soup can reduce the amount you eat after it.
- Never eat until your stomach is full, always leave some room.
- If you are feeling hungry, try taking a drink of water, thirst can sometimes be mistaken for hunger.
- Choose snacks that are packaged in individual portions.

The Food Pyramid

Follow the food pyramid guidelines to ensure that you are eating a well balanced diet.

Choose very
small amounts

Choose any **2**

Choose any **3**

Choose
any **5**

Choose
any **6+**

Drink water regularly - at least **8** cups per day.



www.healthpromotion.ie

Breads, cereals, potatoes:

- ~ Choose a combined total of 6 servings or more per day
- ~ Choose high fibre varieties

1 serving is:

- 1 small bowl of breakfast cereal
- 1 slice of bread
- 3 dessertspoons or 2 tablespoons of cooked pasta or rice
- 1 medium potato (choose boiled or baked)

Fruit & vegetables:

- ~ Choose 5 or more portions/day
- ~ The more colour the better

1 portion of vegetables is:

- 1 dessert bowl of salad
- 1 small bowl of homemade vegetable soup
- 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables (raw, cooked, frozen or tinned)
- 3 heaped tablespoons of beans and pulses

Dairy:

- ~ Choose 3 servings per day
- ~ A balanced dairy intake is particularly important if you are on steroids, to reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- ~ Choose low-fat options

1 serving is:

- 1 small glass of milk (200 ml)
- 1 pot of yoghurt (125g)
- 1 oz (30g) of cheese (a matchbox-sized piece)

Protein:

- ~ Choose 2 servings per day
- ~ Red meat, 3 times per week, aim for fish at least twice per week
- ~ Make sure that you grill or bake, not fry
- ~ Trim off the fat before you cook it

1 serving is:

- 2oz (60g) cooked lean meat or poultry (e.g. half of one small chicken breast; edible portion of one small lamb chop)
- 3-4 oz (90-120g) cooked fish (e.g. one small salmon steak; one small fillet of plaice)
- 2 eggs (not more than 7 per week)
- 3 tablespoons cooked pea/beans

Fats, sugar, confectionery:

- ~ These should be used sparingly
- ~ Choose low-fat or sugar free options if possible
- ~ Keep them as treats

Alcohol:

- ~ 14 standard drink units for women, 21 units for men
- ~ Check with your medical team to ensure there are no interactions with your medication

1 standard drink =

- 1/2 a pint of beer, cider, stout or ale
- 1 small glass of wine (approx 100mls – you should get 7 glasses from a bottle)
- 1 measure of spirits (vodka, whiskey, gin, etc.)= 1.5 units

Trying to gain weight:

Some people will find they are losing weight unintentionally and may need to gain weight. Unintentional weight loss is a loss of your lean body mass or muscle, which will affect your breathing and mobility. It may be necessary to commence oral nutritional supplements. Speak to your GP or Dietitian if the following tips are not helping you to gain weight.

- Don't wait until you feel hungry to eat, have 3 meals and 3 snacks per day (little and often).
- Try to include a source of carbohydrate at every meal.
- Try to include rich sources of protein at least twice per day.
- Have milky drinks after your meals or in between as a snack.
- Avoid drinking immediately before or during meals as it may fill you up.
- Do not use low fat or diet products.

Fortify your food to add more calories as follows:

- ~ Add milk powder 'Marvel' ® to your milk and then use this for making milk puddings, in drinks and in cereal.
- ~ Make coffee, hot chocolate, soups, mashed potato and porridge with fortified milk.
- ~ Add extra full fat spread to bread, potatoes, sauces and vegetables.
- ~ Use jam, honey, chocolate spread or peanut butter on scones, bread, biscuits, cakes and puddings.
- ~ Grate cheese onto toast, baked potato, scrambled egg, potatoes and vegetables.

Final points to remember:

- Establish your BMI and what you need to do to achieve a healthy BMI. Your GP or practice nurse can calculate your BMI for you.
- Do not ignore unintentional weight loss, this is of no benefit and may be detrimental to your health.
- Weigh yourself once per week, at the same time of the day, in the same clothes and on the same scales.
- If you are on steroid therapy, ensure you are taking at least three portions of dairy per day. You may need to discuss a calcium supplement with your Doctor, as steroids can increase your risk of osteoporosis.
- Remember, **energy in=energy out**. If you need to lose weight then you need to change this balance. Decrease the amount you are eating and increase the amount of energy you are using in order to lose weight.
- Keep faith, it can be achieved.

Useful websites:

Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute: www.indi.ie

Weight loss tools and information: www.weigh2live.eu

Step by step guide to eating well: www.littlesteps.eu

British Dietetic Association: www.bda.uk.com

The Irish Heart Foundation: www.irishheart.ie

The British Heart Foundation: www.bhf.org.uk

This information leaflet was compiled using information supplied by Yvonne Duggan, Senior Dietitian, Mater Hospital.

Support the ILFA

The Irish Lung Fibrosis Association is a voluntary organisation which relies on donations and fundraising activities to achieve its aims of research, education, and support.

If you would like to volunteer your time or if you want to know more about fundraising for ILFA, please contact us by email, telephone, or in writing.

If you would like to make a donation to ILFA, cheques, postal orders, or bank drafts can be made payable to the Irish Lung Fibrosis Association.

ILFA are also registered with www.mycharity.ie for on-line donations.

If you would like to donate on a regular basis, we can help you to set up a Standing Order. Further information is available on the website.

Thank you for your support.

***Research
Education
Support***

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