



**UVA Digestive
Health Center**

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Nutrition Tips

Healthy nutrition habits are always a good idea. However, this is not the time to begin a very strict diet. In general, there are no special diet recommendations for ALS. There is no benefit to restricting or increasing certain foods, nutrients, vitamins, or herbals. To avoid losing any more muscle, we encourage our ALS patients to eat every 3-4 hours. This prevents the body from breaking down and using muscle tissue for calories.

There is value in maintaining a healthy weight.

- If you are currently at a healthy weight, your goal should be to maintain this weight.
- If you are overweight, we do encourage a healthy, gradual weight loss of one-half to 1 pound per week. This may in fact be helpful for your mobility to achieve a healthier weight.
- If you have recently experienced unintentional weight loss you should be sure to meet with one of the registered dietitians within the ALS clinic. The dietitian can provide you with recommendations on how to increase the caloric intake of your diet.

Vitamins and minerals: we have no good studies that supplementing your diet with extra vitamins or minerals is helpful (unless you have been diagnosed with a deficiency and your physician has advised you to take a particular supplement).

Many persons with ALS reach a point when it is difficult to meet nutrition needs by eating alone. There is an option to consider. You may have heard about the option of a feeding tube. You can read more about this and other nutrition topics with ALS at the following website: www.ginutrition.virginia.edu.

Constipation may be a problem – the best solution is to get enough fluids over the day. Although the addition of fiber and fiber supplements may help some, others may not tolerate fiber for various reasons. If constipation becomes a problem, please let us know so we can help.

You will also have the opportunity to meet with a registered dietitian at every ALS clinic appointment. We are there to answer your questions and help with solutions to nutrition related problems.