

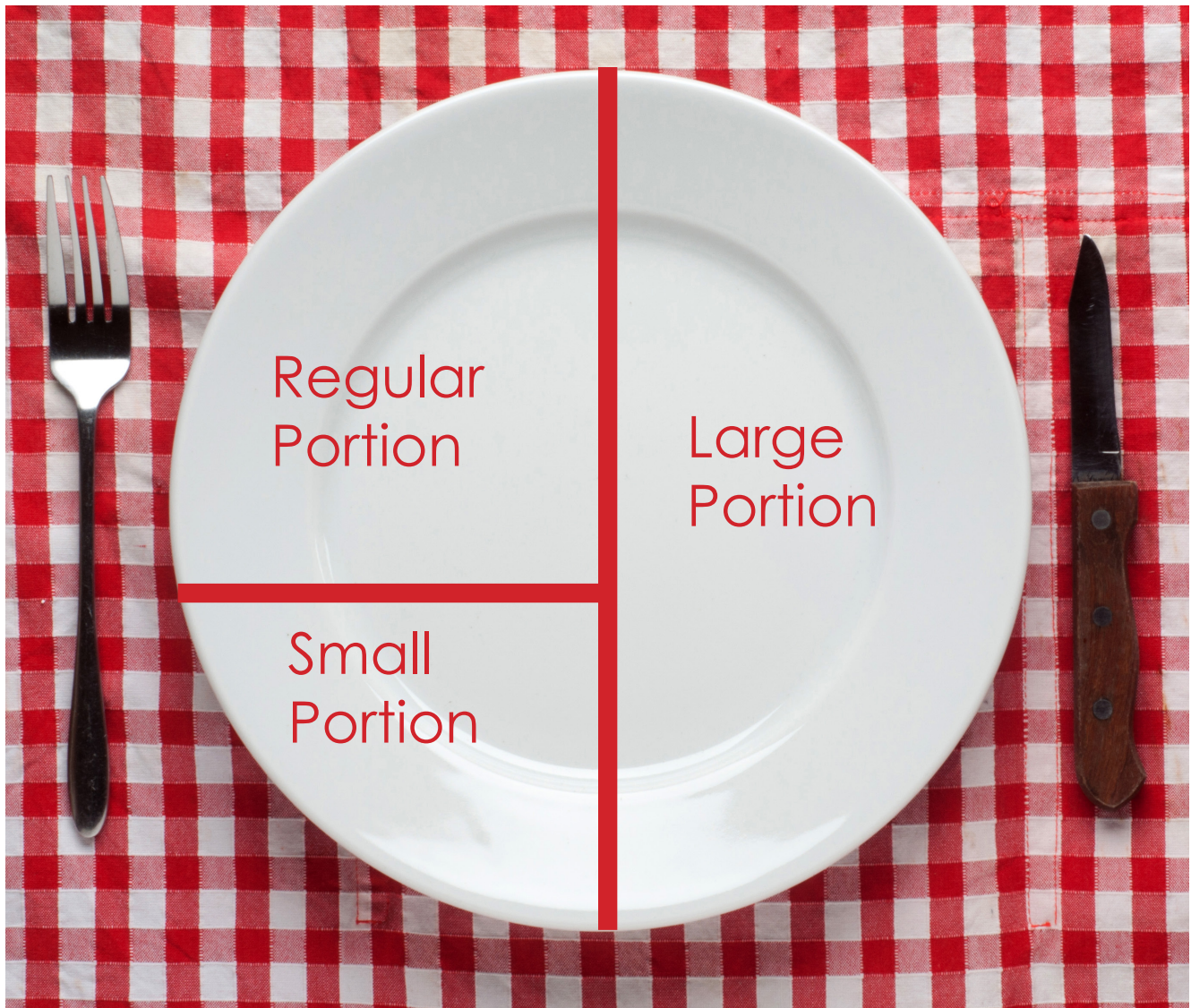
# Food Diary

For Respiratory Patients





# Measuring Portion Sizes



Terms like “small,” “medium,” and “large” can be subjective, so it's important to be as specific as possible when recording your portion sizes. Keeping an accurate record of not just what you eat, but how much, will help you determine whether your symptoms are linked to the food itself—or simply to the quantity consumed. You may find that certain foods are well-tolerated in smaller portions but cause discomfort or breathing issues in larger amounts. Use standard measurements when possible (e.g., cups, ounces, number of pieces), or refer to a plate guide to estimate portions. The more precise your entries, the more valuable your food diary will be in identifying patterns.

## Filling Out Your Food Diary: A Powerful Tool for Managing COPD

Keeping a food diary might feel like tedious work at first—but it's one of the most powerful tools you can use to understand how your diet affects your breathing, energy levels, and overall health. For people living with COPD, even small changes in what or how you eat can make a big difference in how you feel.

This daily journal will help you become a nutrition detective—tracking not just what you eat, but how it affects your body. By paying close attention to your meals, symptoms, and physical activity, you can uncover patterns that help you breathe easier and live more comfortably.

### Why Track Food When You Have COPD?

People with COPD often face unique challenges during mealtimes. Large meals can make breathing feel more difficult, and certain foods may trigger bloating, heartburn, or shortness of breath. By keeping a detailed food diary, you can:

- Identify foods that make your symptoms worse or better
- Recognize portion sizes that feel manageable
- Spot links between food and fatigue, gas, bloating, or labored breathing
- Fine-tune your eating schedule to avoid symptoms disrupting sleep
- Support conversations with your healthcare provider or respiratory therapist

### How to Use Your Food Diary Effectively

#### 1. Be Detailed About What You Eat and Drink

Don't settle for vague descriptions like "chicken and vegetables." Instead, aim for detail:

- "Roasted chicken thigh seasoned with rosemary and thyme"
- "Mashed Yukon gold potatoes with half a pat of butter and a splash of milk"
- "1 cup steamed broccoli, no added salt"
- "8 oz water with a lemon slice"

Include everything—main dishes, sauces, sides, snacks, condiments, and beverages (including water, coffee, alcohol, and supplements). Small things can have a big impact, and beverages are often overlooked but can influence hydration, digestion, and acid reflux.

## 2. Track the Time You Eat

Some foods might sit well earlier in the day but cause discomfort or even worsen breathing at night. That's why it's important to log the time of every meal or snack. This can help you uncover patterns—like if a certain food disrupts your sleep or makes evening breathing harder.

## 3. Mark Meals vs. Snacks

We've included checkboxes or prompts for you to mark whether what you ate was a meal or a snack. Why? Because traditional meal structures (breakfast, lunch, dinner) might not work for everyone with COPD. In fact, many people find that smaller, more frequent meals help them avoid shortness of breath or that uncomfortable, over-full feeling.



So if you're eating five or six smaller meals a day instead of three, that's okay—and for many, it's ideal. Whether you had two lunches or a light breakfast and three snacks, label it in a way that reflects your new routine.

## 4. Pay Attention to Portion Sizes

Some foods may be fine in small amounts but become problematic in larger portions. For instance, you might tolerate half a serving of pasta with no issues—but feel bloated or short of breath after a full plate.

Use visual cues or standard measurements when possible:

“2 slices of whole wheat toast”

“1 scrambled egg with 1 tablespoon of shredded cheese”

“1/2 cup brown rice”

“1 medium apple, peeled”

You can also refer to our included plate portion guide to estimate your intake if measuring isn't practical.



## 5. Log Physical Details and Symptoms

After each meal or snack, use the “results” section of your food diary to check in with your body. Pay attention to:

- Breathing changes: Was your breath more labored? Did you need to use oxygen sooner?
- Digestive issues: Any bloating, gas, reflux, or abdominal pressure?
- Energy levels: Did the meal leave you feeling fatigued or give you a boost?
- Sleep quality: Did something you ate in the evening keep you up or disrupt your rest?
- Other sensations: Tickling in the throat, itchy tongue, dizziness, coughing, or tightness?

Even if a symptom feels minor—write it down. These small details can help you uncover connections between certain foods and your COPD symptoms.

## 6. Note Your Activity and Body Position



How you were sitting or moving before or after a meal can affect your breathing too. That's why it helps to log what you were doing around mealtime. For example:

- Reclining or lying down
- Sitting upright at a table
- Walking or light housework
- Bending, stooping, or lifting

Being mindful of posture and activity can help you create a more COPD-friendly eating environment.

## Tips for Success

Keep your diary nearby—on the fridge, kitchen counter, or even on your phone or tablet using a note app.

Be honest and consistent. This isn't about judgment—it's about helping yourself.

Bring your food diary to appointments so your care team can make more personalized recommendations.

Review patterns weekly—are there foods or habits that always leave you short of breath or bloated? What meals leave you energized and breathing well?

## Final Thoughts

Food is fuel—but it's also comfort, routine, and sometimes even a source of stress. For people living with COPD, taking time to understand your body's relationship with food is an empowering step toward better health. This food diary is your personal roadmap, helping you create a diet that supports easier breathing, improved energy, and overall well-being.

You don't need to be perfect. You just need to be consistent, curious, and honest. Over time, this daily practice may help you feel more in control of your health—and breathe just a little easier.



## Example of How to Fill Out Diary Entries

On the next page, you'll find a food diary template that you can either print and fill out or use as a guide to create entries in your own notebook.

Date/Time	Meal	Portion Size	Food	Result
<b>5/9/2019</b> <b>9:15 AM</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Breakfast	<b>1 egg</b>	<b>Scrambled Egg, Olive Oil, Cholula</b>	<b>Mild Acid Reflux While Cleaning</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch	<b>Small</b>	<b>Grits with Strawberries</b>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack	<b>2 pieces</b>	<b>Bacon</b>	
<b>5/9/2019</b> <b>11:15 AM</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast	<b>5 pieces</b>	<b>Peanut Butter Pretzels</b>	<b>None</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner	<b>1 Glass</b>	<b>Ice Tea with 1 TSP sugar and slice of lemon</b>	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Snack			

Date/Time	Meal	Portion Size	Food	Result
	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack			



## STEP —TWO—

You can only live a few weeks without...  
Water / Food



### Watch Your Weight - In Both Directions

#### People with Chronic Bronchitis

have a tendency to have excess body weight, making the heart and lungs work harder and breathing difficult.

Your doctor or dietitian can advise you on how to achieve a healthier body weight by following a customized eating plan and the right exercise program.



#### People with Emphysema

have a tendency to be underweight. If you're underweight, you may feel weak, tired and be more prone to infections.

You will need to include healthy, high-calorie snacks in your diet, including milk, eggs, oats, quinoa, beans, cheese, avocado, nuts and nut butter, and healthy oils.



Brought to You by:



[www.BreatheStrongAmerica.org](http://www.BreatheStrongAmerica.org)

The information and advice provided by Breathe Strong are intended for general informational purposes only. While we strive to deliver accurate, research-backed content, we are not medical professionals, and our content should not be considered a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Always consult a qualified healthcare provider or physician for specific concerns regarding your health, fitness, or nutrition.