NUTRITION FOR RECOVERING ADDICTS

Nutrition plays an important role in recovery from substance abuse. Drugs and alcohol can affect metabolism, organ function, and mental well-being, and can prevent the body from properly absorbing, digesting, and using nutrients. This leads to vitamin deficiencies and poor nutrition overall.

You can make the right choices to aid in the healing process. Food and nutrition supplies the body with energy, as well as important vitamins and minerals that you need to start physical repair and boost your immune function.

DURING DETOX

[Detoxification](https://healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/treatments/addiction-recovery#chemicaldependencydetoxificationtreatment) can include side effects such as nausea, vomiting, fatigue, constipation, and diarrhea. Balanced nutrition helps improve mood and health, which makes people feel better.

* You may forget what hunger feels like and mistake it for substance cravings; eat three meals a day and snacks as you need to re-regulate you hunger and metabolism.
* Your appetite might be poor; consider nutritional supplements if you are struggling to eat.
* You may experience nausea; choose foods that are easy on your stomach like vegetable soup, rolls, Jell-O, or yogurt.
* You may want to replace one addiction with another; food sometimes fills that void, which can lead to unwanted weight gain.
* Your doctor may prescribe vitamins; often substance abuse can lead to vitamin deficiencies, including magnesium, B vitamins, vitamin D, zinc, and iron.
* You may experience constipation; choose foods high in fiber like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

FOOD CRAVINGS

Did you know there is scientific evidence of changes in the chemistry in our brains that is linked to cravings? It is similar to addictive substances. This is part of why so many people complain of struggling with food cravings during treatment.

So what should you do? Below are some tips to help you deal with cravings while you are a patient here as well as after your treatment:

* Eat regular meals and snacks.
* Don’t wait until you are starving to eat.
* Eat until you feel full, not stuffed.
* Get plenty of exercise.
* Use moderation.
* Keep a log.
* Track what emotions cause you to crave certain foods and work to handle those emotions in other ways.
* Practice mindful eating.
* Find your motivation.
* Practice “done-ness”.
* Find something else to do.

WEIGHT GAIN

Struggling with weight gain while detoxing? Try doing some of these things:

* Listen to your body: eat when you are hungry; stop when you are full.
* Honor your craving, with consideration to your health.
* Participate in groups as much as possible. Being up moving and thinking will engage your mind and body more than taking a nap.
* Make exercise part of your routine. Even walking around outside during fresh air breaks can be a good start.
* Load up on fruits & veggies. These low-calorie, high-fiber options will help you feel full without contributing to weight gain.
* Limit soda. Your body needs fluid right now more than ever. Soda can actually dehydrate you more. Aim for no more than 8 ounces of soda per day.