

# Appetite & Digestion Following Baby Loss

## Looking after yourself when eating feels difficult

After baby loss, it is common for grief and stress to affect your appetite and digestion. You may find that you have little interest in food, feel sick, have a dry mouth, experience changes in your bowel habits, or simply forget to eat.

There is no need to force yourself to eat normally straight away. **Small, manageable steps are enough.**

## You may notice

Grief and stress can affect the body in different ways. You might experience:

- Reduced appetite or loss of interest in food.
- Nausea or a feeling of having a 'knot' in your stomach.
- Changes in bowel movements, including constipation or diarrhoea.
- Bloating or abdominal discomfort.
- Eating more or less than usual.
- Forgetting to eat or drink when you are overwhelmed.
- Feeling tired, weak or lacking in energy.

These experiences can be part of how your body responds to stress and loss.

## If eating feels difficult

Try taking the pressure off yourself.

Instead of focusing on eating a full meal, try **little and often**:

- Have small snacks throughout the day.
- Choose foods that feel manageable and comforting.
- Keep easy-to-eat foods available.
- Try nourishing drinks such as milk, smoothies or soups.
- Eat when you can rather than waiting until you feel very hungry.
- Accept help with shopping, preparing food or eating together.

There is no need to make food complicated. **Something is better than nothing when you are struggling.**

### **Don't forget to drink**

Grief can make it easy to forget about drinking.

Keep a drink nearby and take regular sips throughout the day. Water, squash, milk or other drinks that you enjoy can all contribute to your fluid intake.

### **Supporting your digestion**

Gentle routines can help your digestive system:

- Drink regularly.
- Gradually return to your usual meals.
- Include fruit, vegetables and fibre when you feel able.
- Gentle movement, such as a short walk, may help digestion and wellbeing.
- Give yourself time and privacy when using the toilet.
- Try not to ignore the urge to open your bowels.

If you are taking pain medication or other medicines, these can sometimes affect your digestion. Speak to your GP, pharmacist or maternity team if you are concerned.

### **Be kind to yourself**

There may be days when eating feels easy and days when it feels almost impossible.

Your body is recovering while you are also experiencing grief. **You do not need to do everything perfectly.**

Focus on the basics: a little food, enough fluid, rest and gentle care.

### **When to seek help**

Speak to your GP or healthcare professional if you are struggling to eat or drink, are losing weight without intending to, have ongoing vomiting, persistent abdominal pain, significant changes in your bowel habits, or are worried about your physical health.

If you are unable to keep fluids down, feel faint or very unwell, seek urgent medical advice.

**Looking after your body is not separate from grieving. It is part of caring for yourself while you move through your loss.**