



Health Concerns

Wasting

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What is wasting?

- Wasting is defined as an unexplained weight loss of 10% or more of your normal body weight
- Wasting can occur when you have chronic diarrhea for more than one month, or chronic weakness with fever for more than one month.

What causes wasting?

- Wasting can be caused by many factors including social, economic, mental, emotional and physical.
- Wasting can be caused by either not taking in enough food (malnutrition), or not being able to absorb the nutrition from the food that is eaten (malabsorption).
- **Malnutrition** can be caused by:
 - an inability to afford food due to limited income
 - poor appetite due to depression, illness or side effects of medications
 - not having energy to shop for, prepare or cook food
 - a problem with chewing or swallowing due to gum or teeth diseases, or thrush or ulcers in the mouth
 - a problem with keeping food down due to nausea and vomiting
 - feeling full after eating only a little because the stomach is not emptying the food properly
- **Malabsorption** can be caused by:
 - infection in the stomach or bowels that cause loss of their ability to absorb nutrients from food eaten
 - diarrhea due to infections in the stomach and bowels or due to side effects of medications.

What are the symptoms of wasting?

- Loss of more than 10% of your original body weight without trying
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea

How can wasting be prevented?

- Good nutrition: talk to a dietitian or nutritionist who can give you advice on what kind of food to eat that will match your body's needs
- Take additional vitamins or nutritional supplements



- Exercise to build and strengthen your muscles may prevent loss of body mass
- Consult physician and/or dentist when you experience symptoms that affect your appetite, eating or swallowing. They can help find out what caused the problems and start treatment early.

How can wasting be treated?

- Treatment should be based on the cause of the symptoms. Sometimes a combination of strategies is needed to help the problem.
- Ulcers and gum diseases can be treated with medications such as Thalidomide
- Thrush can be treated by medications such as Ketoconazole, Fluconazole or Itraconazole
- Diarrhea can be treated by using medications such as Imodium, Lomotil or Somatostatin, or treating infections in the gut that causes diarrhea
- Appetite can be stimulated with medications such as Megace or Marinol
- Weight gain can be stimulated with medications such as anabolic steroids or human growth hormone
- In some cases, short-term or long-term feeding through a tube in the stomach or in a vein may be helpful for people with severe wasting

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