

Loss of Appetite in Adults with Cancer: Screening and Assessment

Screen for loss of appetite at each visit and validate ESAS score.

ESAS Score 1- 3

ESAS Score 4-6

ESAS Score 7-10

To support the diagnosis of anorexia vs. stage of cachexia recommend use of the following evidence-based assessment tools:

- Malnutrition Screening Tool
- Patient Generated Subjective Global Assessment
- Diet history, Physical Assessment and Laboratory investigations to support diagnosis of anorexia vs. stage of cachexia.
- Percentage of weight loss over time evaluates malnutrition

Assessment using Acronym O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V and W (adapted from Fraser Health)

Onset	When did you notice your lack of appetite? Is it there all the time?
Provoking / Palliating	Is there a time of day when your appetite is better/worse? What do you think may cause your lack of appetite? Have you had any recent surgery or treatment that you think is affecting your ability or desire to eat? Are you taking any medications that are affecting your ability to eat?
Quality/Quantity	Compared to your normal food intake, are you eating the same amount? More than usual? Less than usual? Are you drinking enough fluid?
Related Symptoms	Are there other symptoms that affect your ability to eat? (e.g. nausea/vomiting, constipation/diarrhea, sore or dry mouth, taste changes, bothersome food odours, problems swallowing, early feelings of fullness, pain, shortness of breath, depression)
Severity	How much is the lack of appetite affecting your activities of daily living or ability to function?
Treatment	Are you doing anything to help manage your loss of appetite (e.g. any physical activity, medications, or changes to your diet)? Is it working?
Understanding / Impact on You	How is the lack of appetite affecting you and/or your family? Do you feel distressed about your inability to eat? Have you experienced feelings of pressure, guilt or relational stress with regard to food intake and weight loss?
Values	Are there any other views or feelings about this symptom that are important to you or your family?
Weight	Have you lost weight recently without trying? If yes, how much? What was the time frame? Have you been eating poorly because of a decreased appetite?

**Mild Loss of Appetite
Anorexia or Pre-Cachexia**

- Weight loss <5% in past 6 months
- Treatment/medication related anorexia and/or weight loss
- No subjective report of dehydration

**Moderate Loss of Appetite
Anorexia or Cachexia**

- Weight loss >5% in past 6 months
- Tumour/treatment/medication related
- C-Reactive Protein value indicating inflammation

**Severe Loss of Appetite
Refractory Cachexia**

- Extreme sarcopenia
- Advanced disease, progressive loss of muscle mass with functional impairment (low Palliative Performance Score)

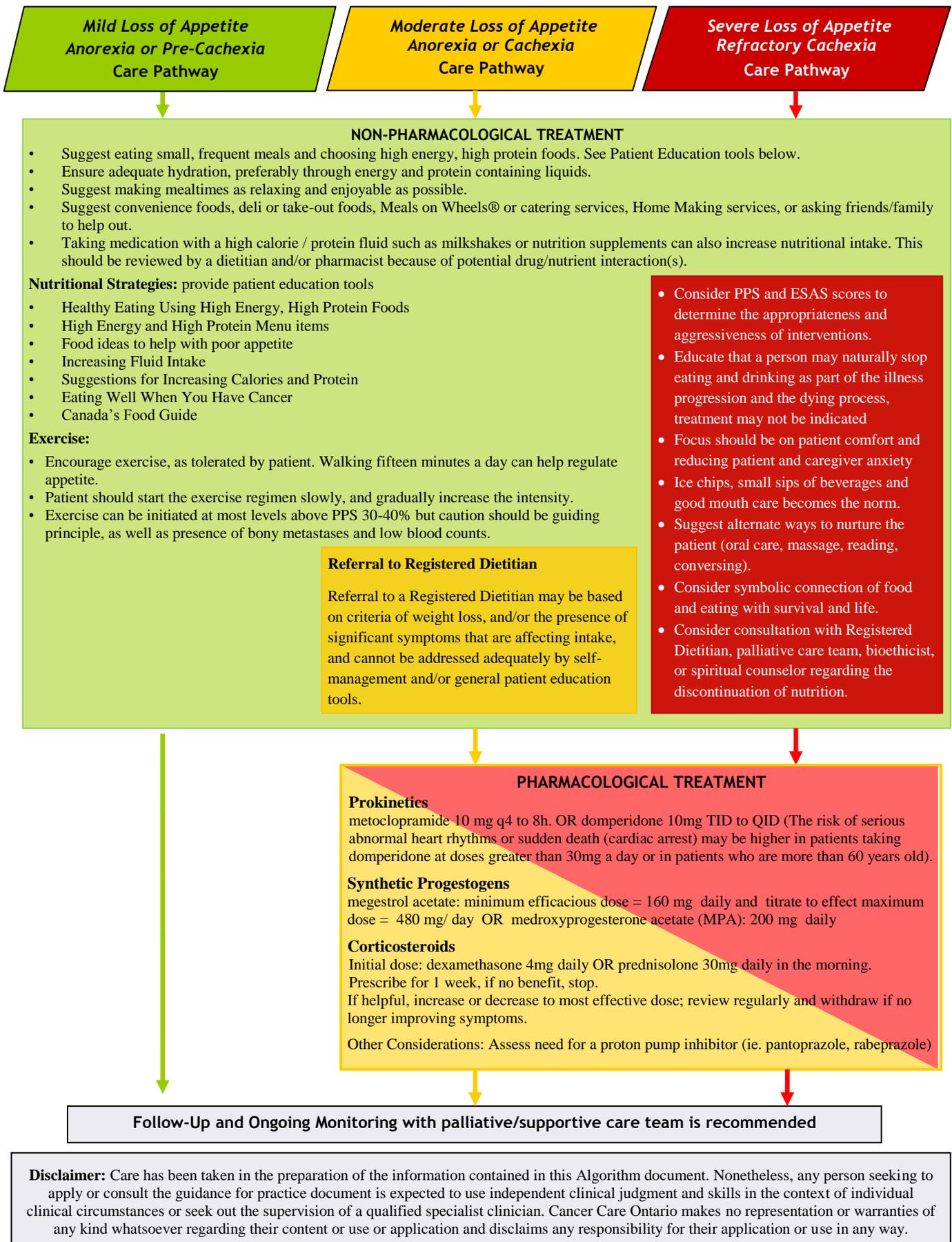
Interventions for all patients, as appropriate

- Early consultation with the palliative or supportive care team should be considered
- Screen, assess and manage potential causes of secondary cachexia (anti-cancer treatment, other medication and psychosocial factors).
- Consider stage of disease, progression of disease and Palliative Performance Scale (PPS), or functional status when determining goals of care and treatment plans.
- Provide emotional support to patient and family.
- Consider importance of food in the social context and impact on quality of life, cultural issues, patient's accessibility to food.
- Referral to other health care professionals where appropriate.

For full references, links to tools and more information please refer to

[CCO's Symptom Management Guide-to-Practice: Loss of Appetite document](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/symptools) (www.cancercare.on.ca/symptools).

Loss of Appetite in Adults with Cancer: Care Map



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