

Children's Section: A guide to a High Energy Diet for Children

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

Why does my child need to eat well?

- All children need enough calories and protein to grow well and stay energetic.
- The simplest way to increase calories children eat is to pack as much as possible into their food
- Lack of protein, minerals and vitamins may make your child more open to illness or delay the healing process.

Meal Pattern

- Eating small, frequent meals and snacks during the day will be easier to manage than 3 larger meals if your appetite is poor.
- Aim for 3 small meals each day with 2-3 snacks or nourishing drinks in between.
- Meals and drinks should be high in calories and protein to meet your daily requirements.
- Drinks, snacks and meals can be fortified to make them more nutritious.

Milk

- Use full fat milk
- Encourage milk as a drink, or milkshakes, or milk on cereals, or in puddings and soups.
- Only give milk as a drink after meals so it doesn't spoil their appetite
- Do not give more than a pint of milk a day and do not use it as a meal replacement as it will stop your child from eating.



Adding Extra Calories to Food

- Children need to eat more fat than an adult especially if they are growing slowly
- Fat is the most concentrated source of calories.
- Add 1-2 teaspoons of sunflower or olive oil to vegetables, potatoes, baked beans, casseroles and curries.
- Spread margarine thickly on bread and do not use low fat options
- Add double cream to cereals, fruits, yoghurts, sauces, custards and puddings

- Use full fat or thick and creamy yoghurts, fromage frais and crème fraiche as snacks, or plain versions added to foods.
- Add grated cheese to vegetables, potatoes, sauces, casseroles, omelettes, scrambled eggs.
- Cheese cubes or cheese on toast are a great high calorie finger food snack
- Fry foods such as fish fingers, sausages, bacon, burgers, eggs, chips etc in sunflower, rapeseed or olive oil
- Use full fat mayonnaise, salad cream and dressings for salads and sandwiches
- Offer a dessert after main courses such as trifles, sponges, mousse, yoghurt and ice-cream.

High Protein Foods

- Protein helps your child build muscle tissues
- The following foods are high in protein:
 - All types of meat and fish e.g. mince, sausages, chicken and fish fingers
 - Beans and pulses e.g. chickpeas and lentils, add to casseroles and curries
 - Eggs, cheese and baked beans – make easy meals or snacks
 - Nuts – whole nuts for children over 5 years and nut butters and pastes are suitable for all children over 6 months.

Iron rich foods:

- Anaemia causes low energy levels.
- Ensure your child has iron rich foods – refer to www.nnuh.nhs.uk : Patient information leaflets – Iron Content of Foods (Children).

Sugar and Starchy Foods

- Starchy foods should be offered at every meal these include: bread, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals, potatoes and cous cous.
- Sugar provides extra calories but should be added to foods moderately to prevent dental caries.

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Fruit & Vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables are important for vitamins. Include small helpings with meals but don't fill up on these, as they are low in protein and calories.
- Use the ideas mentioned to add extra calories and protein to fruit and vegetables.
- It is important for your child to like fruit and vegetables as hopefully they will not always need a high energy diet and will need to eat more fruit and vegetables.

Top Tips to encourage your Child's Appetite

- Offer 3 small meals and 2-3 small snacks/day
- Try using a large plate with a small amount of food on it
- Give family foods, but if your child has difficulty with a spoon or fork, ensure the foods can be easily picked up with their fingers.
- You need not spend a long time preparing meals. A sandwich or something on toast will often do, frozen foods



The following suggestions can sometimes be difficult to establish but will help your child to learn what is expected of them. Children respond well to routine and having boundaries set.

- Have a structured plan. Ideally offer water or milk between the planned meals and snacks. Try not to offer more than a pint of milk a day
- Try and sit at a table and eat as a family and encourage your child to eat with other children e.g. siblings, at nursery, playgroup and other friends houses etc.

- It is important that you try not to worry and remain calm. A relaxed attitude and sensible meal pattern will help your child to eat and gain weight.
- Children respond well to attention. Try to ignore your child when they are not eating and praise them when they do eat even if it has to be at every mouthful! Pleading or attempting to force feed will worsen the situation
- Allow a max of 20-30minutes for a meal. If your child has not eaten, do not coax or punish them. Just remove the meal without comment and do not give any food, sweets, milk or flavoured drinks before the next planned snack, even if your child asks for them.
- Give your child lots of attention at times other than mealtimes. Hopefully then, attention at meals becomes less important to the child.

Ideas for High Energy Snacks

- Full fat milkshakes
- Mix full fat yoghurts and fruit (fresh or canned) in a blender to make a refreshing yoghurt drink
- Cake bar
- 1-2 biscuits
- Small bag of crisps
- For children over 5 – a small bag of peanuts
- Cereal bar
- Crumpets or scones with butter, jam or cheese
- Muffin
- Full fat yoghurt or fromage frais
- Pepperoni
- Mini scotch eggs
- Mini sausage rolls
- Cheese – Babybel, Soft cheese triangles, Cheese Strings, Cheese Dippers/ Dunkers
- Buttered sandwich with jam/ meat/ fish/ Egg and mayonnaise/ Cheese/ peanut butter

