

Nutrition Support: Ideas to help you maintain or gain weight

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 do you need to eat well?

- If you have a poor appetite, you may have lost weight or be at risk of losing weight.
- Eating too little may also affect your energy levels.
- Lack of protein, minerals and vitamins may make you more prone to illness or delay the healing process.
- It is important that you eat a balanced diet to provide all the necessary nutrients, which can be provided by simple meals and snacks.

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.

Protein Foods

Meat and Fish

- Include at least 75-100g (3-4oz) meat, chicken, or fish with a cooked meal
- Ready meals are a good option to have in the fridge or freezer. Try fish in sauce, shepherd's pie or lasagne.
- Include smaller portions of meat or fish in a sandwich or on toast e.g., sardines on toast

Milk & Yoghurt

- Aim for at least 568ml (1 pint) of milk per day. Use whole (full fat) milk if you are risk of losing weight.
- Fortify milk by adding skimmed milk powder to increase protein and calorie content. Whisk 4 heaped tablespoons (about 50g/2oz) skimmed milk in powder into 568ml (1 pint) milk.
- Use milk or fortified in tea, coffee and other drinks such as malted drinks and hot chocolate, milky puddings, custards, cereal and savoury sauces such as parsley, cheese or white sauce.
- Include a milk-based dessert such as milk pudding, custard, milk jelly, thick and creamy yoghurts, fruit fools and mousses.
- Use Greek yoghurt or evaporated milk as toppings for fruit or cereal.

Cheese and Eggs

- Have a cheese or egg meal for a change e.g., cauliflower cheese, macaroni cheese, quiche, scrambled eggs, or omelette
- For a snack, try cheese or egg on toast or cheese on crackers

Beans & Lentils

- To make soups and casseroles more nutritious, try adding tinned (ready to eat) lentils or beans such as butter beans or red kidney beans

High Calorie Foods

- Calories come from protein foods, but they also come from fats, oils, cream, starchy foods (bread, potatoes, pasta,

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High Calorie Foods

rice and cereals) and sugar.

- Margarine, butter, and oil are all fats and contain similar numbers of calories.
- Do not use light, reduced or low-fat foods if you are trying to increase your weight.
- Spread butter or margarine thickly on bread and crackers, mash into potatoes, melt on boiled/jacket potatoes and stir into hot pasta or rice.
- Roast potatoes and chips are high in calories and are good to include in your diet.
- Add double cream to soups, sauces and puddings or use as a topping for cereals and fruit.
- Try making cheese sauces and have with vegetables, fish or pasta.
- Grated cheese can be mixed into scrambled eggs, potatoes, soups and beans on toast.
- Try adding sugar to drinks, breakfast cereals and fruit desserts.
- Add jam, honey or syrup to cakes and scones.

Dried Fruit and Nuts

- Add dried fruit to cereals and milk puddings or snack on raisins or dried apricots
- Snack on plain, salted, dry roasted or chocolate covered nuts.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables are important for vitamins and fibre.
- Include small helpings with meals but avoid filling 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 may be advisable to take a general multivitamin and mineral supplement to help improve your diet.

Super Snacks

Here are some ideas for quick and easy snacks to have between meals. Those marked ☺ could be eaten instead of a meal if you do not have much of an appetite.

- ☺ Bowl of cereal with milk or fortified milk and sugar.
- ☺ Cheese, baked beans or sardines on toast
- ☺ Cheese and crackers
- ☺ Sandwiches of tuna and cucumber, cheese and tomato, ham, and pickle.
- ☺ Bowl of creamy soup and a roll.
- ☺ Peanut butter on toast
- Yoghurt/fromage frais/mousse/fruit fool or any other individual pot dessert.
- Scones, toasted teacakes, crumpets or muffins. Top with butter, jam, honey and/or cheese.
- All cakes, such as fruit cake, flapjack, sponge cake and cream cakes.
- Nuts, any type, or mixed fruit and nuts.
- Milkshake. Try adding fresh fruit and ice-cream for a “thick shake”
- Malted drink made with milk and 2-3 plain biscuits.