

## Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

# Prevention or treatment of weight loss: high protein & high calorie diet information

This leaflet provides information for people who need to have a high calorie and high protein nutritious diet because they have lost weight through illness. This should normally be for short term use only.

## Introduction

For the body to work at its best, it is essential that it receives a nutritious diet. This is especially important when you are, or have been, unwell.

A nutritious diet can:

- Help you to avoid losing weight and regain the weight you may already have lost
- Help you feel stronger
- Prevent the body from breaking down its own stores of fat and muscle
- Help your body fight infections more effectively

In this leaflet you will find helpful suggestions on how to make your diet as nutritious as possible. It also provides practical advice to help you cope if you have a small appetite.

## Which foods do I need to eat?

**It is important to have a variety of foods each day since no single food group has all the nutrients necessary to maintain health.**

### Protein

These are the building blocks of the body. We need protein to maintain and repair body tissues. Foods high in protein are:

- Meat and poultry
- Fish
- Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs



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- Vegetarian alternatives such as Soya, Quorn or Tofu
- Nuts and seeds
- Beans, peas and lentils

### Energy (calories)

Foods high in energy provide fuel for the body. Even at rest we still need energy. While you are ill, your body needs more energy than normal. In general, if we eat plenty of high energy food or drinks we will gain weight; if we don't take enough we will lose weight.

### Foods high in energy:

- Bread, cereals, chapatti, potato, rice, pasta
- Butter, ghee, margarine, vegetable oils, double cream
- Squash, fizzy drinks (not diet), biscuits, cakes, puddings, glucose, honey, jam, sweets, chocolates

### Fruit and vegetables

These provide the body with a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre:

- You can use fresh, frozen or tinned varieties. Try not to overcook them as some of the nutrients will be lost or destroyed
- Try a glass of fruit juice or fortified squash
- Aim for 5 portions of fruit, vegetables or salad daily so long as they don't fill you up too much

### Milk and dairy foods

These are an important source of protein, energy and calcium. These include:

- Full cream milk, Channel Island, breakfast milk. Try to aim for 1 pint of milk per day
- Cheese (soft or hard)
- Yoghurt (natural or fruit) thick & creamy
- Fromage frais (not low-fat or diet)

You should not find it too difficult to increase the protein and energy content of your diet if you have a good appetite. However, there may be times when your appetite is not so good particularly if you are not well or recovering from treatment. Here are some ideas which may help.

### Helpful hints for a small appetite

- Try to have smaller meals or snacks more frequently rather than trying to have 3 larger meals per day. See meal and snack ideas

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- Add extra nutrients to your food and drink by enriching them. Follow advice on how to enrich your food
- If you do not feel you can manage a pudding after your meal, save it for later
- If your appetite is better at certain times of the day e.g. in the morning, make the most of these times and try to increase your intake
- Try to have as varied a diet as possible and include favourite foods
- Fry foods where possible, or if you grill, brush oil over your portion before and during grilling
- If you feel tired, make larger quantities and freeze individual portions or try frozen ready meals from your supermarket
- Try not to fill up on drinks before and during eating
- Choose nourishing drinks rather than tea and coffee made with water. Sip them between your meals. Nourishing drinks include: Fortified full cream milk (see below for recipe), on it's own or as a milky coffee, hot chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlicks or milkshake
- Soup, try 'cream of' varieties where possible
- Meritene or Complan shakes, in sweet or savoury flavours. These sachets are available at most chemists and supermarkets. Make them up with either cold or warmed full cream milk rather than water
- If possible, try to get some fresh air or exercise before meal times
- If agreed by your doctor, a small alcoholic drink before meals may improve your appetite

## How to enrich your food

### Fortified milk

- 1 pint full cream milk
- 4 tablespoons milk powder
- Mix the milk powder with some of the milk to make a runny paste and then add the remaining milk. Whisk together and refrigerate for up to 24 hours.
- Fortified milk can be used in place of milk or water to make coffee, hot chocolate, packet soups, milk puddings, custard, cereals and sauces.

### Double cream, evaporated or condensed milk

- Use cream or evaporated milk in sauces, cereals, custard, soups, puddings, mashed potato, scrambled eggs or on fruit or jellies

### Ice-cream

- Add ice cream to milkshakes

### Cheese

- Try to use the full fat varieties e.g. cheddar, feta, mozzarella, cheshire, cream cheese.

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- Sprinkle on tinned or fresh pasta, toast, baked beans, mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, omelette, cooked vegetables, or into soups

### **Sugar, syrup, honey or jam**

- Add to cereals, puddings and scones or spread on toast

### **Yoghurt**

- Use thick and creamy variety.
- Add to fruit (fresh, tinned, stewed), jacket potatoes or in salad dressing

### **Butter, margarine or oil**

- Melt over cooked vegetables or into mashed potato
- Use olive oil or other flavoured oils as salad dressing

## **Meal and snack ideas**

### **Small meal ideas:**

- Fish fingers
- Chicken, beef or bean burger
- Boiled, scrambled, poached or fried egg
- Baked beans or macaroni cheese
- Sardines or pilchards
- Omelette with ham, cheese, mushrooms
- Toast with peanut butter, pate
- Cheese or cream cheese and crackers
- Toasted tea cake, English muffin, crumpet, scotch pancakes, croissant with butter, jam or honey
- Bagel and cream cheese
- Sandwich, wrap, batch or pitta with egg mayonnaise, ham, cheese, tuna mayonnaise, coronation chicken, bacon, sausage
- Jacket potato with cheese, beans, tuna, salmon, coleslaw
- Cereal with full cream or fortified milk
- Soup with bread
- Cornish pasty, cheese pasty, steak slice, individual filled pie

**If you are able to manage more, try these with bread, toast or chips**

### **Snack ideas:**

- Crisps, nuts, mini cheese biscuits, bombay mix, chevda, gathia
- Chocolate
- Samosa or pakoras
- Chocolate éclair or profiteroles
- Scone with butter, jam and cream
- Strawberries and cream or ice cream

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- Banana and custard
- Bread sticks or nachos and dips e.g. avocado, mint yoghurt, humous
- Wedge of pizza, pork pie, sausage roll, or quiche
- Thick and creamy fruit yoghurt or fromage frais
- Slice of cake, malt loaf or doughnut.
- Supermarket mini deserts e.g. mousse, mini trifle, custard, rice pudding, crème caramel
- Sweet biscuits e.g. cream-filled, chocolate digestive, all butter short bread, Jamie Dodgers
- Ice-cream or choc ices

## Oral care for people on a high calorie diet

You have been advised to increase the calorie content of your diet. This might mean eating more sweet or sticky foods and drinks which are not usually recommended for a healthy mouth and teeth. Keeping your mouth healthy can reduce the risk of other infections, such as a chest infection, from occurring.

The following tips can help you balance the benefits of a high calorie diet and a healthy mouth and teeth:

- Visit the dentist regularly and tell them about the diet and ask about protective treatments for teeth
- Brush teeth, gums and tongue, twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, especially last thing at night
- Chewing sugar free gum for 10-20 minutes after eating sweet foods will help to neutralise acid in the mouth.
- If possible drink sweet drinks through a straw and don't swish them around your teeth and if possible keep them to meal times
- Some sweets which are very sticky such as toffee, fudge, fruit chews, boiled sweets, are best avoided. Those which melt away quickly can be used to boost your calorie intake. These are generally better for your teeth too but again limit to meal times if possible
- Don't forget medicines can be sugary as well. Try to take them at mealtimes if possible

## Prescribable nutritional supplements

If you continue to lose weight or are unable to increase your food intake, please contact your dietitian. Nutritional supplements are available on prescription and your dietitian will discuss these with you and your doctor.

If you have regained your weight and are eating well, this diet should no longer be required. Please ask your dietitian or healthcare professional for alternative advice.

# Patient Information

Produced by: Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust

## Your Dietitian is:

### Contact numbers:

024 7696 6161 (University Hospital)

01788 663473 (Hospital of St Cross, Rugby)

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Department	Nutrition & Dietetics
Contact	26161
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