

## Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

# Paediatrics- How to gain weight in Children



**This leaflet provides information for children who need to have a high calorie diet because:**

- They have lost weight through illness
- Due to their medical condition they have higher energy needs
- They have a poor nutritional intake

**This should normally be for short term use only and children should have their weight and height monitored regularly by a paediatric doctor or dietitian while on this diet.**



# Patient Information

## How to Gain Weight

- Offer frequent meals and snacks (3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day). Children are not likely to feel too full for meals if they have snacks
- Ensure you leave a 1-2 hour gap between snacks or drinks and meals  
At least two of the meals should contain a source of protein for example meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans, pulses or lentils
- Try to increase the fat and carbohydrate (starches and sugars) in the diet as these will help to increase your child's weight more
- Do not worry about healthy eating. Children may not be able to gain weight successfully on the low fat, low sugar, high fibre diet recommended for adults.
- A varied diet will ensure that your child gets all the protein, vitamins and minerals needed to grow strong and healthy
- Aim to continue to give 1 pint (568mls) of milk daily for the calcium needed for strong bones. If your child does not like milk remember that the following all contain the same amounts of calcium and may be swapped for each other.

Third pint (200mls) milk = 1 oz (30g) cheese = 1 x 150g pot yoghurt = 2 x 80g pots of fromage frais = 1½ slices of calcium fortified bread

## Fat

Fatty foods are the richest sources of energy. Add fats where possible but make sure that your child is still eating a wide variety of foods.

- Use full-cream or Channel Island/Jersey Gold/Breakfast milk rather than semi-skimmed
- Add full cream milk to:
  - mashed potatoes
  - scrambled eggs
  - cereals
  - custards and milk puddings
- Fry foods where possible or, if you grill, brush oil over your child's portion before and during grilling. Use olive oil, rapeseed oil or sunflower oil which are high in healthy fats
- Spread margarine/butter thickly onto bread/toast/crumpets/chapatti's
- Add margarine/butter to potatoes, sweet potatoes and vegetables before serving
- Add grated cheese to:
  - tinned or fresh pasta
  - baked beans

## Patient Information

- omelettes or scrambled eggs
- mashed/baked potatoes
- soup
- Make instant or packet soups with milk rather than water
- Add double cream to both savoury and sweet dishes such as:
  - soups
  - sauces
  - mashed potato
  - cereals e.g. porridge
  - puddings e.g. whips, custards, milk puddings, cake
  - puddings - jellies, fruit, ice-cream
  - milkshakes
- Add ice-cream to milkshakes and fizzy drinks e.g. ice-cream soda

## Starches and Sugars

Sugars are a good source of energy.

However, to prevent tooth decay remember to brush teeth well, twice daily, using a children's fluoride toothpaste until the age of 6 and adult fluoride toothpaste if they are over 6 years old. Have sugary foods with meals rather than as in-between meal snacks and try to avoid sugary foods which stick to the teeth.

Always remember to tell your dentist that your child needs a more sugary diet than normal to help weight gain.

- Have a starchy food e.g. potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, chapattis, crackers, cereal at each meal.
- Add sugar, honey or dried fruit e.g. raisins to cereals.
- Add jam, marmalade, chocolate spread or honey to toast.
- Have a pudding after a meal (as above)
- Add jam to milk puddings e.g. rice pudding, semolina.
- Add syrups to ice cream - chocolate sauce, raspberry sauce, maple syrup.
- Make milkshakes with full cream milk, milk shake syrup/powder, ice-cream and fruit.
- Have a milky drink e.g. hot chocolate, malted drinks or milkshake before bed.

## Examples of High Energy Snacks

- Piece of fruit loaf with thickly spread butter
- Cereal bar

## Patient Information

- Full fat yogurt
- Custard/rice pudding/mousse pot
- Toast spread with avocado/peanut butter/chocolate spread
- Sausage roll\*
- Small slice of pizza
- Cheese and crackers
- Cubes of cheese and chopped apple or pineapple
- Crisps/breadsticks with full fat dips/hummus
- Cupcake/fairy cake\*
- Small croissant with thickly spread butter and jam \*
- Fruit/plain/cheese scone \*
- Chocolate bar \*
- Handful of nuts (over 5 years old)
- Dried fruit e.g. figs/apricots

\* Try not to offer these snacks every day as they are not as nourishing as other snacks on this list

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