

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Paediatrics - How to gain weight in babies



This advice sheet is for parents and carers of infants below 12 months of age, who are failing to thrive. This should be given with advice from a dietitian, paediatric doctor or paediatric nurse. Once the child has gained weight this advice should no longer be followed. Monitoring of an infant's weight and growth is essential.

Babies may not gain weight adequately if they have a:

- poor intake of breast milk or infant formula
- poor intake of solids
- larger energy need due to their medical condition

This leaflet contains simple advice on ways to increase the energy content of your baby's diet.

If your baby has not thrived well since their early months of life they may have already been started on a high energy infant formula by their dietitian or doctor.

In addition, now your baby is on solids, the following suggestions will help your baby to gain more weight.



Patient Information

If weaning from 17 weeks to 6 months

Make weaning solids with expressed breast milk or infant formula rather than water;

- Baby rice
- Baby cereals
- Pureed fruits - e.g. banana
- Pureed vegetables- e.g. potato, sweet potato, parsnip, swede, carrots, broccoli

Weaning from 6 months

All foods can now be included in the diet.

Have 1-2 main meals daily consisting of **Protein** e.g. pureed meat /poultry /fish or grated or soft cheese or eggs/beans or lentils + **Starchy** food e.g. mashed potato /rice/pasta/couscous /bread /chapatti + **Vegetables**

Tips on increasing the calories/energy in your baby's diet

1. Add double cream to:
 - Puréed fruit/fruit pouches
 - Mashed potatoes
 - Sauces for pasta meals
 - Soups
 - Milk puddings
2. Add 1 tbsp margarine/butter/oil to:
 - Mashed/puree vegetables
 - Stews/soups/dhal
 - Savoury food pouches/jars (if using already)
3. Try to give one milky pudding a day
 - Custard
 - Full fat yoghurt
 - Milk puddings-rice, semolina, tapioca pudding
 - Blancmange
 - Egg custard

Patient Information

4. Add grated cheese to
 - Pasta meals
 - Baked beans
 - Mashed potato
5. Offer cereals / rusks as a bedtime snack if your baby is willing
6. Try to make home-cooked foods as much as possible, as these are more nourishing (avoiding spices/salt) however if using commercial weaning jars/pouches read the labels and chose those which are higher in calories
7. Try to maintain a minimal milk intake of **600mls** (20fl oz) breast milk or infant formula per day in addition to solids.

From 8 - 12 months

Continue with the previous advice but in addition **try finger foods.**

Babies always eat and enjoy food more if they are allowed to feed themselves and make a mess. Never leave your baby alone with finger foods as there can be a risk of choking

Good finger foods for weight gain at mealtimes are:

- Fish fingers, fish cakes (fried)
- Chicken nuggets, chicken fingers
- Sausages, sausage rolls, hot dog sausages
- Cheese, cheese spread triangles, cheese on toast
- Eggy bread (dip bread in beaten egg & fry), omelettes
- Chips, Alphabites, Smiley faces, potato waffles
- Sandwiches or toast - thickly spread with butter or margarine, and nut butters /cheese spread
- Sweet potato wedges
- Pizza fingers
- Slices of avocado

Where possible try to choose the varieties with the lowest salt content.

Good finger foods for weight gain between meals but not to be offered every day:-

- Toast/brioche thickly spread with butter or margarine and jam/nut butters or cheese spread
- Corn puff crisps, vegetable puffs, fruit puffs, rice cakes

Patient Information

- Biscuits
- Savoury biscuits or crackers with butter or margarine and cheese spread
- Chocolate
- Cakes and pastries
- Ice cream cones

Dental Hygiene

Remember that eating sugary foods between meals can be harmful for teeth. If your baby has teeth, you should **brush them twice daily** with a small soft toothbrush and water. If your baby is following the gaining weight advice for a long period it would be advisable to begin regular **dental checks** and tell the dentist that your baby is on a high calorie diet.

Produced by Coventry Dietitians,
University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust.
Contact number: 024 7696 6161

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

Document History

Author: Susan Cooper
Department: Dietetics
Published: May 2008
Reviewed: June 2019
Review: June 2021
Version: 6
Reference: HIC/LFT/696/08