

Department of Nutrition & Dietetics

Dietary Advice to Gain Weight and Protect Your Heart

If you have a small appetite you should choose foods that are high in calories to prevent weight loss. However, some high calorie foods can be high in saturated fat, which can increase your cholesterol levels, and this is harmful for your heart. This leaflet provides information for people who need to gain weight and protect their heart.

This is not a stand-alone diet sheet. The information should only be given out by a Dietitian and in conjunction with other dietary advice.

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.



Patient Information

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 later for snack ideas).
- 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 your favourite foods.
- Fry foods where possible, or if you grill, brush oil over your portion before and during grilling (see 'Heart Healthy Fats' section for the best fats to choose).
- If you feel tired, make larger quantities when you don't feel so tired and freeze individual portions or try frozen ready meals from your supermarket (try to choose reduced salt options when possible).
- 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 milk (see below for recipe) on its own or as a milky coffee, hot chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlicks or milkshake.
- 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 milk rather than water;
 - These should be taken as an additional snack and not to replace meals.
- 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.

Fortified Milk

- 1 pint 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.

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- Fortified milk can be used in place of milk or water to make coffee, hot chocolate, added in to the Complan and Meritene shakes, milk puddings, custard, cereals and sauces.

Heart Healthy Fats

You can add extra fats to your foods to increase the number of calories in your meal. Animal fats such as butter, lard and ghee contain saturated fats, which are unhealthy for your heart as they can increase your cholesterol. The following fats are heart healthy fats which do not increase cholesterol but still provided extra calories. Add them to salads, soups, sauces, vegetables, and potatoes.

- Rapeseed oil
- Olive oil
- Groundnut (peanut) oil
- Olive oil based margarine

Oily fish is an excellent source of omega 3 fats. These can help to reduce the 'stickiness' of the blood to reduce the chance of a clot forming. You can safely eat up to 4 servings of oily fish (fresh/frozen/tinned) per week, for example mackerel, kippers, pilchards, trout, salmon, sardines or herrings. A serving is 140g or 5oz. (Note: tinned tuna does not contain omega 3 and you are advised to only have tuna twice per week). Women who are pregnant, breast feeding, or likely to become pregnant in the future can safely have up to two portions of oily fish a week, but need to avoid shark, sword fish and marlin.

The best source of omega 3 from non-fish sources is flaxseed oil (also known as linseed oil). The suggested amount is 3 teaspoons per week; add it to cereal or yoghurt. Try to spread this out in the week rather than having it all in one go.

Flaxseed oil is not recommended for cooking and should be stored in dark bottles away from heat and light to retain its properties.

Protein

These are the building blocks of the body. We need protein to maintain and repair body tissues. Try to include protein foods at all meals. Foods high in protein are:

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- Meat and poultry (remove skin from chicken and any visible fat from meat),
- Fish,
- Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt, cheese,
- Eggs,
- Vegetarian alternatives such as soya, Quorn or tofu,
- Nuts and seeds,
- Beans, peas and lentils.

Snack Ideas

- Unsalted/uncoated nuts (walnuts, peanuts, almonds, pecans, pistachios, hazelnuts),
- Dried fruit, or fruit with custard e.g. banana with custard,
- Fruit with yogurt and added nuts/seeds,
- Yoghurt, rice pudding, fromage frais,
- Soya desserts and soya yogurts,
- Avocado and tomato on toast with olive oil drizzled on top,
- Toasted tea cake, English muffin, crumpet with added jam* or honey*,
- Toast with peanut/nut butter and jam*,
- Biscuits with dried fruit and nuts with cups of tea/coffee (made with fortified milk).

Small meal ideas with added calories

Don't forget to spread olive oil based spreads thickly on bread or toast.

- Oily fish on toast or crackers,
- Boiled, scrambled, poached or fried egg on toast (fried in olive/rapeseed oil),
- Baked beans on toast with grilled or fried mushrooms/tomatoes (in olive/rapeseed oil)
- Jacket potato with olive-oil or rapeseed-oil based spread, topped with beans, tuna, or salmon,

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- Cereal with fortified milk and dried fruit and seeds/nuts,
- Porridge with fortified milk and added seeds (linseeds, flaxseeds)
- Wholegrain bread sandwich with smoked salmon/lean chicken and lettuce/cucumber,
- Stews and casseroles with added beans/lentils and where possible add fortified milk to sauces,
- Noodle stir fry with salmon/lean chicken/lean meat and vegetables (fried in olive/rapeseed oil),
- Fish pie made with salmon or cod and mashed potato top (use fortified milk to make a white sauce and add olive oil spread to mashed potato).

***Please watch sugar content/intake if you have diabetes.**

Supplementation

People over 65 years should take a supplement of 10micrograms of vitamin D per day. If you want advice on taking other 'over the counter' supplements speak to your dietitian or pharmacist.

Further Support

If you need any further information please contact the Department of Nutrition & Dietetics at UHCW on 024 7696 6161 or Rugby St Cross on 01788 663473.

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

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