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

How to Gain Weight

- **Offer regular meals and snacks:** Provide 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day. Children are not likely to feel too full for meals if they have snacks.
- **Timing:** Make sure you leave a 1-2 hour gap between snacks or drinks and meals.
- **Protein:** Include a source of protein in at least 2 meals, such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans, pulses or lentils.
- **Increase fat and carbohydrate:** Focus on adding more fat and carbohydrate (starches and sugars) to the diet to help increase your child's weight.
- **Diet approach:** Do not worry about healthy eating. A low-fat, low-sugar, high-fibre diet recommended for adults may not help children gain weight successfully.
- **Varied diet:** Make sure a varied diet to provide all the necessary

protein, vitamins and minerals for your child's growth and health.

- **Calcium intake:** Aim to give 1 pint (568mls) of milk daily for the calcium needed for strong bones. If your child does not like milk, the following can be substituted: Third pint (200mls) milk = 1 oz (30g) cheese = 1 x 150g pot yoghurt = 2 x 80g pots of fromage frais= 250g (2 pots or ½ tin) of custard or rice pudding=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:** Select full-cream or Channel Island/Jersey Gold/Breakfast milk rather than semi-skimmed.
- **Full cream milk:** Add full cream milk to mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, cereals, custards and milk puddings.
- **Frying and grilling:** Fry foods whenever possible. If you grill or oven bake, brush oil over your child's portion before and during grilling or baking. Use olive oil, rapeseed oil or sunflower oil, which are high in healthy fats.
- **Margarine/butter:** Spread margarine or butter thickly onto bread, toast, crumpets or chapattis. Add margarine or butter into potatoes, sweet potatoes and vegetables before serving.
- **Grated cheese:** Add grated cheese to tinned or fresh pasta, baked beans, omelettes or scrambled eggs, mashed or baked potatoes and soup.
- **Soups and sauces:** Prepare instant or packet soups and sauces with milk instead of water.
- **Double cream:** Add double cream to both savoury and sweet dishes such as, soups, sauces, mashed potato, cereals (like porridge), puddings (like whips, custards, milk puddings, cake), jellies, fruit, ice-cream, milkshakes or hot chocolate drinks.
- **Ice-cream:** Include ice-cream in milkshakes and fizzy drinks (like 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. Use 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 that stick to the teeth.

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

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

Examples of High Energy Snacks

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