

Eating well with a small appetite

Everyone needs a balanced diet for health. However this can be difficult if you are feeling ill or have lost your appetite.

Poor food intake may lead to weight loss, tiredness and lack of energy. If you continue to lose weight you can become malnourished. This means you are more likely to pick up an infection or to fall. Wounds take longer to heal. People who are malnourished tend to become less active and less able to look after themselves. Sometimes these problems can lead to frequent and long hospital admissions.

A diet with enough energy (calories) and protein is important to help stop weight loss and reduce the risk of these problems. Malnourished older adults with acute or chronic disease require more protein in their diet. An adequate intake of protein and energy can help limit and treat age-related declines in muscle mass, improve strength and function abilities. If you are eating less than normal or losing weight without meaning to, the tips in this leaflet will help you:

- reduce weight loss or even increase your weight
- feel energetic and stronger

Tips for coping with a small appetite

- Try “little and often” - small meals and snacks, for example 3 small meals plus 2-3 snacks or nourishing drinks each day. Have something nourishing every few hours. See examples on pages 3 and 4.
- Try smaller portions or eating from a smaller plate if you are over faced at mealtimes.
- Drinking lots of fluid before meals may fill you up - try drinking after a meal instead. This also applies to any nutritional supplement drinks you may be taking – have them after or between meals, not before.
- Make use of ready meals if you are too tired to cook, for example macaroni cheese, Shepherd’s pie, lasagne etc.
- A small amount of alcohol before meals (if permitted) can stimulate your appetite.
- A small amount of exercise may also improve your appetite.
- Relax before meals and take your time over eating.



Enriching/ fortifying your diet

If you feel you can't eat enough, it is important to make the food that you can manage as nutritious as possible. You can improve your weight and reduce bone and muscle loss by increasing the energy (calories) and protein in your diet. This is important to help prevent falls, fractures and infections. Try some of these suggestions.



Use milk for extra protein and energy

- Use full fat milk in drinks, puddings, sauces etc.
- Fortify your milk: take a pint of full fat milk, add 2-4 tablespoons of dried milk powder (e.g. Marvel or Supermarket own brand) to a small amount of milk and mix to a paste. Add the remaining milk mix well and store in the fridge and use throughout the day
- Or add 1-2 teaspoon skimmed milk powder into your hot drinks



Cheese is also high in protein and energy

- Add grated cheese to mashed potatoes, pasta dishes, soup, baked beans, vegetables and sauces
- Use cheese spread or sliced cheese on plain crackers, or add extra to sandwiches



Non-dairy ways of adding protein and energy

- Add lentils, beans and chickpeas to soups, casseroles and curries
- Add peanut butter to biscuits, crackers or toast
- Add a tablespoon of ground almonds to porridge or puddings
- Use hummus as a tasty and nutritious dip or sandwich filling



Fats and oils are very high in energy

- Spread butter or margarine thickly on bread, crumpets, chapattis
- Add butter or margarine to potatoes, vegetables and sauces
- Use oils in salad dressings and in dips for bread, pittas, chapattis
- Add mayonnaise to sandwiches
- Add double cream to porridge, sauces, puddings, casseroles, fruit



Sugary foods are also good sources of energy

- Add sugar and dried fruit to cereals and porridge
- Add sugar, honey, syrup or jam to desserts or puddings
- Add sugar or honey to drinks
- Have a fruit juice with breakfast and after or between meals

AVOID 'diet', low calorie or low fat foods or drinks; these will not give you as much energy as normal versions.

TOP TIP If you don't feel up to cooking, it's ok to use ready meals. Make sure the meal contains protein - meat, fish, eggs, cheese, pulses, and nuts. Enrich your meal using some of the tips here.

Ideas for nourishing snacks and nibbles

- ✓ Scone with butter or cream/jam
- ✓ Toasted teacake with butter or margarine
- ✓ Slice of fruit cake or malt loaf with cheese
- ✓ Cakes, pastries, fruit pies
- ✓ Toasted crumpet with butter or jam
- ✓ Biscuits or crackers with butter and cheese or peanut butter
- ✓ Scotch egg, mini quiche
- ✓ Sausage roll, mini pork pie
- ✓ Full fat yoghurt or mousse
- ✓ Sweets and chocolates
- ✓ Bag of crisps
- ✓ Handful of nuts
- ✓ Individual milk or sponge pudding
- ✓ Ice cream
- ✓ Spring rolls
- ✓ Pakoras, samosas, bhajis
- ✓ Toast with pate or hummus

See more ideas in our leaflet 'High energy high protein shopping list ideas'

Quick and easy meal ideas

Breakfasts

- Porridge made with fortified or full fat milk and honey, syrup or jam
- Cereal with full fat milk and sugar
- Toast with thickly spread butter or margarine and jam, marmalade, peanut butter or soft cheese
- Scrambled eggs made with double cream on buttered toast
- Fried bacon, egg, beans and toast
- Kippers on buttered toast

Lunches

- Soup with double cream or grated cheese and thickly buttered bread
- Toast with butter and pilchards, sardines, baked beans, cheese or scrambled eggs
- Sandwiches with butter/margarine plus cold meat, bacon, tinned fish, cheese, boiled egg - add salad cream or mayonnaise to fillings
- Jacket potato with butter and baked beans, tuna mayonnaise or cheese

Evening meals

- Casseroles or stews with added cream and mashed potatoes
- Macaroni cheese
- Fish fingers / chicken pieces / sausages with chips or mashed potatoes and baked beans
 - Jacket potato with beans, cheese and coleslaw or tuna mayonnaise
 - Chicken curry with double cream plus chapatti with butter or paratha
 - Fish, chips and mushy peas

Desserts

- Rice, semolina or sago pudding – enrich with some double cream
- Sponge pudding and custard
- Ice cream
- Full fat yoghurt
- Individual trifle, mousse, cheesecake
- Jelly and cream or ice cream
- Tinned fruit in syrup with evaporated milk or cream

Ideas for nourishing drinks

A nourishing drink could make a good alternative to a snack if you're not feeling hungry, for example a milkshake (bought or homemade), fruit smoothie, hot chocolate, cocoa, Horlicks and Ovaltine.



Our leaflet "Nourishing Drinks for Adults" provides more ideas for drinks you can try.

Nutritional Supplements

You could try an "over the counter" supplement drink for extra nutrition in addition to your meals. You will find these at most

chemists and some supermarkets. Examples:

- Complan – milkshakes and soups in a range of flavours
- Meritene Energis – milkshakes and soups in a range of flavours

Your GP may consider prescribing nutritional supplements if you are still struggling to improve your weight after trying the tips in this leaflet.

Fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables tend to be low in energy and protein so are not always priority in gaining weight. However, some fruits, vegetables and root vegetables are sources of energy and some protein. For example mango, pineapple, dried fruits, sweet potatoes, potatoes, peas, squash, avocado.

Multivitamins

Food and drinks are the best way to get all your vitamins and minerals. However, if you are struggling with this you might need to take a multivitamin and mineral tablet. Speak to a dietitian, doctor, or pharmacist about this.

Still losing weight?

Tell someone e.g. a family member, carer, or doctor. **Act quickly.**

Contact information

For further information contact the person who gave you this leaflet or:

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
Airedale General Hospital
Skipton Road
Steeton
Keighley
BD20 6TD
Tel: 01535 294758/294857 (direct lines)

The Trust's Patient Information Service is here to help you to find out more about health condition, local support groups and healthy living

The Patient Information Service is at Airedale General Hospital
Tel: 01535 294413 Email: your.health@anhst.nhs.uk
Web: www.airedale-trust.nhs.uk/YourHealth

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **01535 294019**

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