

Finger foods

Finger foods can provide a nutritious and enjoyable alternative to plated meals. They can also be used to provide extra nutritious snacks to those who need them.

They can be particularly useful for people who forget to eat or find co-ordination difficult, such as with dementia or following a stroke.

If a person has a swallowing difficulty finger foods are not usually suitable.

Finger foods can be:

- served at the table in place of a plated meal
- offered as snacks between meals
- left in different places to pick up and eat throughout the day, e.g. bedside table, in a bag, car.

Benefits of finger foods

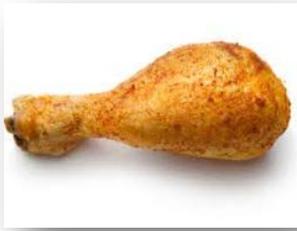
- Enable people to feed themselves, helping maintain independence
- Help preserve eating skills
- Can renew interest in food and stimulate appetite
- Can improve food intake
- Can boost confidence and self-esteem at mealtimes
- Offer more choice and freedom to eat as desired
- Don't need to be served hot
- Good for people who need time to eat

Food groups

Suggestions are divided into the following food groups to help plan a balanced menu:

High protein		Especially important in older and malnourished people to help reduce risk of falls, infections and pressure ulcers. Include in all main meals.
Starchy carbs		Important for energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals. Include in all main meals.
Fruit and veg		Normally these should represent a third to a half of daily diet. But for someone who is malnourished these are less important because they are lower in calories and protein.
High fat/sugar		High in energy (calories) so good for weight gain, but low in protein.

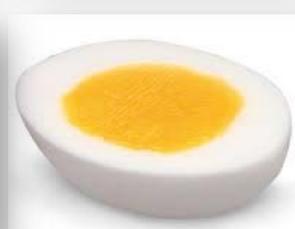
High protein finger foods



cold meat pieces
chicken drumsticks
mini sausages
mini burgers
rolled-up ham
pieces of meatloaf
fish fingers/goujons
crab sticks

cooked prawns
scampi pieces
meat/fish on skewer
sushi
boiled egg halved
scotch egg
mini quiche
nut loaf

nuts
cheese cubes
cream cheese rolls
ice-cream cone
frozen yoghurt on sticks
chicken/meat spring rolls
chicken/meat/lentil
samosas or pakoras



To increase calories:

Add dips e.g. full fat mayonnaise, cream cheese, tartare sauce, Greek yogurt. Offer as extra snacks between meals.

To reduce calories:

Cut off visible fat, grill/oven bake rather than frying, choose lower fat, lower calorie options.

Starchy carbohydrate finger foods



toast fingers

cereal bars

small bread rolls

finger sandwiches

eggy bread squares

malt/fruit loaf

crumpets

oatcakes/crackers

digestive biscuits

waffles

mini naan slices

pitta slices

small chapatti

pizza slice

quiche slice chips or
potato wedges

new potatoes

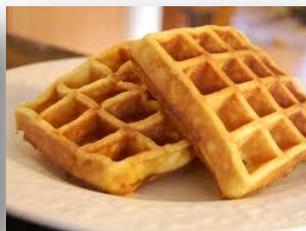
small roast potatoes

potato or corn crisps

rice cakes

popcorn

Ideas for fillings/toppings: try meat/fish paste, cold meats, squashed tinned fish, tuna or egg mayonnaise, marmite, butter, cream cheese, cheese spread, houmous.



To increase calories:

Add butter, full fat mayonnaise, jam, set honey, peanut butter, chocolate or hazelnut spread, clotted cream

To reduce calories:

Eat in moderation. Rice cakes and popcorn (without butter/sugar) are lower in calories.

Fruit and vegetable finger foods

mini or sliced banana
orange segments
sliced apple/pear
grapes and berries
melon/ pineapple chunks

peach/nectarine/mango
slices with stone removed
fruit kebab
dried fruit
salad sticks (carrot, celery,
pepper, cucumber)

cherry tomatoes
sugar snap peas
baby corn
cooked vegetables –
broccoli spears, cauliflower
florets, green beans



To increase calories: Add dip e.g. houmous, cream cheese, Greek yogurt, clotted cream. Try frying fruit slices in butter and sugar. Add cream on fruits.

High fat/sugar finger foods and dessert ideas

sausage rolls
mini pork pies
mini scotch eggs
spring rolls
bhajis, pakoras, samosas
mini croissants, pastries,
pain au chocolate

mini brioche rolls
mini muffins
fun-size cake bars
(remove wrapper)
iced buns
cake pieces
flapjacks

chocolate cornflake cakes
funsize chocolates
biscuits
ice lolly/ ice cream cone
mini fruit pie
jam tarts, mince pies
baklava



Example finger food menus

Adapt these menus to take into account individual likes, dislikes and dietary requirements. See tips in earlier sections for ideas to increase or decrease calories.

Example Menu 1

Breakfast

Cereal bar and 3-4 dried apricots
Orange juice
Tea or coffee

Mid morning

Eggy bread squares, fruit slices
Tea or coffee

Lunch

Mini beef burgers (90g) in mini bread buns (40g) with tomato sauce, potato wedges, baby corn,
Malt loaf

Mid afternoon

Squares of toast with pate or cream cheese
Tea or coffee

Evening meal

Chicken and vegetable skewers with yogurt dip, salad sticks, pitta slices
Slice of cake

Bedtime

Milky drink e.g. Horlicks, Ovaltine, hot chocolate, milkshake

Example Menu 2

Breakfast

Hard-boiled egg in quarters
Toast squares with butter/jam
Apple juice
Tea or coffee

Mid morning

Flapjack, fruit slices
Tea or coffee

Lunch

Mini quiche (100g), baby potatoes (100g), broccoli spears
Mini fruit pie

Mid afternoon

Cheese cubes and grapes
Tea or coffee

Evening meal

Mini sandwiches e.g. tuna mayonnaise, egg mayonnaise, soft cheese, salad sticks
Mini chocolate cornflake cakes

Bedtime

Milky drink e.g. Horlicks, Ovaltine, hot chocolate, milkshake

Tips when offering a finger food menu

- Menu needs to be creative and varied
- Present food attractively, e.g. attractive plate, different coloured foods
- Use foods that are easy to hold. For people who wander choose foods that can be eaten on the move or carried in a pouch
- People's capabilities can change, finger foods might be better at certain mealtimes and plated meals at others
- Show the person what to do so they can copy
- Allow time to look at the food and explore it
- Take time to describe the food
- Some foods will lose their freshness and appeal if left out for too long, so may need replacing
- Provide wipes or hot flannels to wipe hands before/after meals

Further information

Eating Well with a Small Appetite – ask the person who gave you this leaflet

Nourishing drinks for adults – ask the person who gave you this leaflet

Eating and drinking with dementia - ask the person who gave you this leaflet

High energy high protein diet shopping list ideas – ask the person who gave you this leaflet

Eating well: supporting older people and older people with dementia – practical guide, published by The Caroline Walker Trust, available at cwt.org.uk/publications

Alzheimer's Society guide to catering for people with dementia, published by the Alzheimer's Society, available at alzheimers.org.uk

Contact information

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

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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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