



PATIENT INFORMATION

Simple ideas to help improve your food intake

Introduction

Food and fluid are essential to everyone. Food is the fuel your body needs for all its activities.

Sometimes your body might have extra requirements for food for example if you are ill, or recovering from an illness, or if you are more active than normal.

If enough food is not eaten, then your body gets the rest of the fuel from your muscle and fat store, and you start to lose weight.

Losing weight weakens your body, making you feel tired, lethargic and more prone to infections.

This information has been given to you, either because you have lost weight, or are still losing weight. Therefore you may need to make some new changes to your eating, as a diet that is low in fat and sugar is not applicable to you at the moment.

Small, frequent meals might be better tolerated than 2-3 larger meals daily, therefore try to eat regular varied meals and between meal snacks.

Being a more healthy weight for your height will make you feel better in general and help you to have more energy.

Do you have a small appetite?

This is a common problem. There are several causes, including illness, treatment, anxiety, pain, depression, tiredness or nausea.

Try the following ideas to help improve your food and fluid intake:

- Have smaller meals with frequent snacks for example have three small meals and three snacks daily, rather than three large meals. You may find it easier to snack every 2 hours.
- Nibbling between meals and snacks often helps. Try nuts, dried or fresh fruit, crisps, biscuits or sweets.

- Try to make the food as attractive as possible and serve it on a smaller plate. Don't overload the plate. You can always have second helpings or a dessert if you are still hungry.
- Try having drinks after meals rather than before as they may fill you up.
- Cold food may be better tolerated than hot food. Try sandwiches, salads, ice cream, jelly and yoghurts.
- Soft/moist foods may be easier to eat, for example cauliflower cheese, soups, yoghurts or ice cream.
- Try to have your favourite foods more often to tempt your appetite.
- Strong flavours may also tempt your appetite, for example spicy food, sweet food or bitter foods.
- Smoking can decrease your appetite, so cut down or stop if you can.
- When eating, try to relax and eat slowly in comfortable surroundings with no distractions. After eating, sit quietly and relax for a while before lying down or moving around again.
- If you have "good days" or good times of the day – make the most of them. If you feel hungry make sure you eat, even if your meal is not due at that time.
- Ensure that the food you eat is fortified (see following section) if it can be.
- A small amount of alcohol may stimulate your appetite for example wine, sherry, brandy, Guinness. Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are allowed alcohol with any treatments you may be having.
- If you do miss a meal completely, due to poor appetite, you could have a milky drink or nutritious soup, for example Build-Up® or Complan®. If this continues for more than a few days, you will need to discuss this with your GP or Practice Nurse.

Simple Meal Ideas

If you don't feel like eating a big meal, a lighter meal can be just as nutritious.

Sandwiches - for example cold meat and salad, hard boiled egg with mayonnaise, cheese, tinned meat or fish, peanut butter. Spread filling thickly.

Remember to use plenty of butter or margarine and add dressings (salad cream, mayonnaise, vinaigrette etc) where possible.

Toast - with beans, eggs (hard-boiled, scrambled, poached or fried), spaghetti, cheese or tinned fish (for example tuna, pilchards, mackerel, sardines)

Other ideas

- Jacket potato with various toppings for example cheese, beans, tinned fish, meat with vegetables or salad
- Bacon, egg, tomatoes, beans and bread and butter
- Sausage/fish fingers, beans and chips or mashed potato
- Cauliflower or macaroni cheese with salad or vegetables and crusty bread roll and butter
- Corned beef hash and vegetables
- Pie, pasty or sausage roll and vegetables or salad
- Stew/casserole, with bread or potatoes, pasta or rice
- Omelette, beans/tinned tomatoes, grated cheese, bread and butter
- Soup with extra grated cheese or added milk/cream with bread and butter

Snack Ideas

Try to have small snacks between meals to improve your overall food intake.

Some suitable snacks are:

Biscuits	Cheese
Chocolate	Sandwiches
Toast with butter and jam/honey	Soup with milk/cream/cheese
Cheese and crackers and butter	Bread and butter
Crumpets with butter and jam/honey	Jelly/milk jelly
Fruit bread/teacakes and butter	Milky puddings
Fruit (fresh, dried or tinned)	Milky drinks
Nuts	Crisps
Cakes	Breakfast cereal and milk
Yoghurts – thick n' creamy types	Dips with –breadsticks, celery, carrots etc
Ice cream	Mousse

How can extra energy and protein be added to food?

Use the following advice to increase your energy and protein intake.

Fortified milk

Add 2 – 4 tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder to 1 pint of milk preferably full fat. You can use this as a drink, in cereal or to replace ordinary milk when making custard, milk jellies, milky puddings, sauces, milky drinks (for example coffee, drinking chocolate, malted milk drink) and soups.

Potatoes and vegetables

Add butter or spread, milk or double cream to mashed potato. Add butter or spread to jacket potatoes and other vegetables for example swede, carrots, parsnip. You can serve cheese sauce over vegetables. Try to use plenty of salad cream, mayonnaise and other dressings over salad vegetables. Also try stir fried vegetables.

Soups and casseroles

Try adding grated cheese, dried milk powder or double cream just before serving. If you are having tinned soup, use 'cream of' which will contain more energy. You can make packet soups with milk to make them more nutritious. Add extra meat, lentils, pulses or pasta to soups and casseroles. Have dumplings, bread or croutons with your soups and casseroles.

Snacks

Include nuts, crisps, fruit (fresh, tinned or dried), biscuits, cheese and crackers, cakes and desserts (not low fat or low sugar), chocolate or sweets.

Desserts/puddings

Have desserts with ice cream, cream, evaporated/condensed milk or custard. Add dried fruit, fresh fruit, honey, syrup or jam to milky puddings. Avoid 'low fat,' 'low sugar' or 'healthy eating' desserts.

Drinks

Include fortified milk. Other nourishing drinks include fruit juice, milkshakes, smoothies, non-diet squashes and fizzy drinks, malted milk drinks (for example Horlicks® and Ovaltine®), hot chocolate, Complan® and Build-Up®.

Store Cupboard Ideas

Having a good supply of basic foods at home can be useful for days when you may not be able to go shopping.


Remember to check 'best before' dates before using the foods. **Do not** use them if they are out of date, as they may be harmful to you.

Milk products	Long life (UHT) milk or milk powder Evaporated or condensed milk. Canned cream. Cheese spread.
Meat and fish	Tinned varieties for example tuna, pilchards, salmon, sardines, ham, pork, corned beef, stewed meat in gravy, chicken in white sauce.
Starchy foods	Tinned spaghetti, crackers, breakfast cereals, pasta, rice, biscuits, tinned or instant mashed potatoes. Packet or canned soup. Crisps.
Fruit and Vegetables	Tinned varieties for example beans, soups, dried fruit, lentils, and other pulses
Desserts	Ready made custard, milky puddings, jelly, packet mousse, 'long life' yoghurt, Instant Whip® dessert.
Drinks	Squash, drinking chocolate, malted milk drinks, milk shake powder, 'long life' fruit juice.
Others	Jam, honey, sweets, chocolate, peanut butter, syrup

Make the most of your freezer – keep a few 'ready-made' meals in your freezer for use on days when you don't feel like cooking.

Information given to:_____

Information Given by: Print Name_____Signature_____

Contact Number  _____

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Further copies are available from the intranet (Nutrition and Dietetics website) and iCare.