

Eating Well

A guide to eating well to help you gain or maintain your weight

You have been given this leaflet because you have a poor appetite, or you may have been eating less due to feeling unwell. You may have lost weight or find it hard to maintain your weight.

If you are not getting enough nutrition to meet your body's needs, you will lose weight and could be at risk of malnutrition. Malnutrition makes it more difficult for the body to fight illness and infection and can make you feel weak, tired, and low in mood.

This leaflet contains ideas for making the most of your food. Fortifying foods will ensure you have a diet which is full of nutrients. This means adding protein, vitamins, and minerals as well as energy (calories).

If you have a medical condition, food allergies or issues with swallowing or you have received special dietary advice, the information in this leaflet may not be right for you. Please discuss with your healthcare professional.

First steps

It is important to have a balanced diet including a variety of foods

- Aim to have two to three portions of high protein foods every day, such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, pulses, lentils, cheese, and yogurt
- Have starchy foods such as bread, flatbreads, potato, cereals, roti, rice, or pasta at each meal
- Try to have vegetables, salad, or fruit (fresh, tinned, or frozen) every day
- Aim for two to three portions of dairy foods every day, such as milk, yoghurt, cheese, cottage cheese, fromage frais. These provide calcium for teeth & bone health
- Consider buying a one-a-day A-Z multivitamin and mineral supplement if your food choice is limited

Little and often

- Try eating little and often - smaller portions and snacks are easier to manage
- Aim for three small meals a day and two snacks between meals
- Try having drinks separately from meals
- Have a milky drink at bedtime

Fortified milk recipe

Four heaped tablespoons of dried milk powder & about 600ml/ a pint of full fat/ full cream/ whole milk

- Put the dried milk powder into a jug and mix to a paste with a little of the milk. Gradually mix in the rest of the milk and stir well.
- Provides about 600kcal and 40g protein per 600ml/ a pint

Once made, keep refrigerated and use throughout the day

- Use for tea and coffee or have as a drink on its own
- Use to make porridge and on cereal, or to make custard, milk puddings and milk jellies
- Mix into mashed potato
- Use to make savoury sauces, such as parsley, cheese, or white sauce

Nourishing drinks

Use fortified milk to make nourishing drinks such as fortified hot chocolate or cocoa, milky/ iced coffee, malted drinks, and milkshakes.

- See our [Home-made nourishing drinks](#) leaflet for more ideas.

Ideas to add protein and energy to your food and drinks

Add one tablespoon to one portion of food

- Almond butter, cashew butter - mix into porridge or stews
- Ground almonds - add to vegetable soups, stews, or porridge
- Peanut butter - stir into porridge
- Dried skimmed milk powder – mix to a paste with a little milk and add to porridge, milk puddings, custard, ‘cream of’ soups, mashed potato
- Greek yogurt – stir into porridge, soups, mashed potato
- Grated cheese – sprinkle onto mashed or boiled potato, soups, vegetables, scrambled eggs, and pasta. Mix into savoury sauces and add as a topping to baked dishes such as cottage pie
- For an extra boost of energy, add a little butter, margarine or cream to savoury foods such as mashed potato, vegetables, soups, scrambled eggs. Add cream, full fat crème fraiche, or ice-cream to sweet foods and desserts

Ideas for nutrient-rich snacks

These ideas contain protein as well as extra energy and make a good between-meal snack

- Creamy yoghurts, Greek yogurt
- Custard pots, rice pudding, mousses, crème caramel, individual trifles, custard tarts
- Cheese and crackers, cheese straws, mini cheese scone
- Mini sausage rolls, mini scotch eggs, mini pork pies, falafel, hard-boiled egg, mini samosa
- Peanut cookies, Florentines, nutty flapjacks
- One tablespoon of nut butter on toast or crackers
- A small handful of mixed nuts or chocolate/ yogurt covered nuts
- Hummus, taramasalata, guacamole, salmon pate or mackerel pate with toast triangles

Diabetes

These ideas will add protein and energy to your food without adding too much extra sugar. However, you can have a moderate number of sugar-containing foods as part of a fortified diet. Speak to your GP, nurse, or diabetes team for more information.

Hints and tips

- Eat foods you fancy and try not to miss or skip meals. Try eating at the times you feel most hungry
- If you have difficulty cooking or preparing meals, try ‘ready-meals’ either from the supermarket or a meal delivery service. Add frozen vegetables to make a more balanced meal
- Keep a store of basic foods in case you are not able to get to the shops e.g. long-life milk, tinned meat, hot chocolate, tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables, cereals, biscuits
- Allow plenty of time to eat your meals (so that you are not rushing)
- Try ‘finger foods’ such as toast, sandwiches, cheese, meat, fruit, or vegetables cut into small pieces if you have difficulty with co-ordination or using cutlery
- Could you share a meal with a friend or family member, or attend a local lunch club?
- Some fresh air and gentle exercise may help you to feel hungry

If you follow a plant-based diet, ask for [Eating Well – Ideas for plant-based alternatives](#) for additional ideas, suitable products, and recipes.

If you have used the ideas in this leaflet and have continued to lose weight without meaning to, or if you are concerned about your diet, please see your GP who may refer you to a Registered Dietitian.