

Patient information

Diabetes and nutrition support

Ideas to help you maintain or gain weight if you have diabetes

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice, or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

Why do you need to eat well?

- If you have a poor appetite, have lost weight, or are at risk of losing weight
- Eating too little may also affect your energy levels
- Lack of protein, minerals and vitamins may make you more open to illness or delay the healing process
- It is important that you eat a balanced diet, providing all the necessary nutrients. These can be provided by simple meals and snacks

Meal pattern

- Eating small, frequent meals and snacks during the day will be easier to manage than three larger meals if your appetite is poor
- Aim for three small meals each day with two to three snacks or nourishing drinks in between
- Meals and drinks should be high in calories and protein to meet your daily requirements
- Drinks, snacks and meals can be fortified to make them more nutritious

Protein foods

Milk and yogurt



- Aim for at least 568ml (1 pint) of milk a day
- Use whole milk (full cream/silver top/blue top from supermarket) if you are at risk of losing weight
- Fortify milk by adding skimmed milk powder to increase the protein and calorie content. Whisk four heaped tablespoons (about 50g/2oz) skimmed milk powder into 568ml (1 pint) milk. Use milk or fortified milk in your:
 - tea, coffee or cocoa with sweetener
 - milky puddings and custard (low sugar)
 - milk jellies (with sugar free jelly)
 - on cereals and to make porridge
 - in savoury sauces, such as parsley or cheese
- Include a milk-based dessert, such as milk pudding or custard (homemade with sweetener), milk jelly or “pot desserts” such as yogurt, fruit fools and mousses (check there is no more than 10g carbohydrate per 100g). Use Greek yogurt or evaporated milk as toppings for fruit or cereal.

Meat and fish

- Include at least 75 - 100g (3 - 4oz) meat, chicken or fish if you have a cooked meal
- “Convenience meals” are a good standby to have in the fridge or freezer: try fish in sauce, shepherd’s pie or lasagne
- For a snack meal include smaller portions of meat or fish in a sandwich or on toast e.g. ham or corned beef sandwich, sardines on toast

Cheese and eggs

- Have a cheese or egg meal for a change e.g. cauliflower or macaroni cheese, quiche, scrambled eggs or omelette
- For a snack meal have cheese or egg on toast, cheese and biscuits, or cheese / egg sandwiches
- Try making a cheese sauce to put with vegetables, fish or pasta (or use a packet sauce and sprinkle grated cheese on top)
- Grated cheese can be mixed into scrambled eggs, mashed into potatoes with

extra butter or margarine, or sprinkled onto a bowl of soup or beans on toast

Nuts

- Snack on plain, salted or dry-roast nuts

Beans and lentils

- Choose lentil/bean soups or add tinned (ready to eat) beans such as butter beans or kidney beans to soups or casseroles.

High calorie foods

- Calories come from the protein foods we have already talked about. They also come from fats and oils, cream, starchy foods e.g. bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and breakfast cereals.
- Margarine, butter and oil are all fats and contain similar numbers of calories.
- Do not use “light” or low-fat spread if you are trying to increase your weight.
- Add lots of butter or margarine:
 - spread thickly on bread and crackers
 - mash into potatoes or melt on boiled or jacket potatoes
 - stir into hot pasta or rice and serve with a meat, cheese or vegetable sauce
- Roast potatoes and chips are high in calories and are good to include in your diet.
- Add double cream to soups, sauces and puddings or use as a topping for cereals or fruit.

Fruit and vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables are important for vitamins. Include small helpings with meals but don't fill up on these, as they are low in protein and calories.
- Use the ideas mentioned to add extra calories and protein to fruit and vegetables.
- It may be advisable to take a 'one-a-day' multivitamin and mineral supplement to help improve your diet.

Super snacks

Here are some ideas for quick and easy snacks to have between meals. Those marked 😊 could be eaten instead of a meal if you do not have much of an appetite.

- 😊 Bowl of cereal with milk or fortified milk
- 😊 Cheese, baked beans or sardines on toast
- 😊 Cheese and crackers
- 😊 Sandwiches of tuna and cucumber, cheese and tomato, ham and pickle
- 😊 Bowl of creamy soup and a roll
- 😊 Peanut butter on toast
- Yogurt, fromage frais, mousse or fruit fool with less than 10g carbohydrate per 100g. Stir in 1 - 2 tablespoons of cream
- Toasted teacakes, crumpets, muffins or scones, with butter (and cheese)
- Nuts, any type
- Milky drink (with sweetener) and 2 - 3 plain biscuits, such as rich tea or digestives

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