

Food first advice



Food is very important to help you maintain your health. It contains essential vitamins and minerals as well as protein to help the body repair itself and recover from illness.

Eating well also helps to maintain weight and to fight infections. However when you feel unwell you may not feel like eating – just when you need food the most!

To increase your protein and energy intake, you can either:

- 1) Eat more food/eat larger portions OR
- 2) Eat smaller amounts but more often AND
Enrich the foods you are currently eating by adding foodstuffs that are high in energy and protein.

High energy foods are ones that are:

- High in fat – butter, margarine, oils, cream.

- High in sugar – sugar, honey, molasses, syrup.

Protein foods include:

- Meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs
- Dairy products – milk, cheese, yoghurt, custard, ice cream
- Soy products – soy milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice cream, tofu (choose calcium-enriched varieties)
- Nuts and legumes (kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, baked beans, etc)

The priority at the moment is to make sure you are not losing weight and that you are getting enough calories and energy from your food. This is not the time to be cutting out the amount of fat and sugar in your diet as these are the main sources of energy for you. Once you are feeling well again and are eating regular meals, you can go back to your previous diet.

Making the most of your food

- Try to have a protein food at every meal.
- Aim to have at least one pint of full fat milk (blue top) a day – either by itself or in drinks and puddings. To get extra nourishment mix 4 heaped tablespoons of dried milk powder in a pint of milk – this is called enriched milk.
- Avoid diet and low calorie products at this time – you can return to these once you are back to normal eating patterns. Try and choose full fat products e.g. full fat milk and yoghurt.
- Add cheese, double/sour cream or butter/margarine to vegetables, sauces, soups and mashed potatoes.
- Add extra oil or margarine when cooking your meals, and have a thick spread of butter/margarine when having toast or sandwiches.
- Use mayonnaise, salad cream, cheese, egg or avocado in your meals and snacks.
- Add extra sauces and gravy to meat, chicken and fish e.g. white sauce, parsley sauce, cheese sauce.
- Try a cooked breakfast (eggs/ham/bacon/sausages/baked beans) for breakfast or lunch.



- Make puddings with enriched milk and add extra double cream, honey, syrup or condensed milk.
- Add ice cream, custard, yoghurt or cream to desserts, and to fresh or canned fruit.
- Try to have a small glass of fruit juice a day – add extra sugar and dilute with lemonade to make a longer drink.
- Dried fruit and nuts are a great snack.
- Choose your favourite foods often – eating is to be enjoyed!

If you have a poor appetite...

- Eat little and often – try eating small frequent meals every 2-3 hours.
- Don't skip meals – if you can't manage a meal, try a milky drink instead e.g. milkshake, hot chocolate and a small snack.
- Eat more when you are feeling hungry e.g. if you are hungriest in the morning, try having a cooked breakfast, or snack if you find you are hungry in between meals.
- Eat first, drink later. Drinking with meals can make you feel fuller sooner.
- If you're feeling too tired to cook, choose ready-made oven/microwave/frozen meals or tinned foods.
- If you're unable to cook or prepare meals or shop for yourself, maybe a friend or relative can help you, or you may wish to consider a meal delivery service eg. Meals on Wheels or Appetito (contact Social Services for further information).
- A small glass of alcohol may stimulate your appetite – try having an alcoholic drink 30 minutes before your meal (ask your doctor first to ensure it is suitable to have with any medications you are taking).
- Fresh air can often help stimulate your appetite, try going for a brief stroll or simply step outside for a while. Try to eat in a well ventilated room.
- If possible try and make meal times enjoyable by eating with others, eating in pleasant surroundings, or eating while doing something enjoyable like watching TV or listening to the radio.



Sample meal plan

Below are some **ideas** of meals and snacks. Please use this as **a guide only**.

BREAKFAST

Porridge/cereal with enriched milk and sugar/honey/double cream/dried fruit OR Cooked breakfast with buttered toast
+ Glass of fruit juice
+ Milky tea/coffee or glass of full fat milk/enriched milk

MORNING SNACK

Chocolate/Digestive™/Hob-Nob™ biscuits OR a few squares of chocolate + Milky tea/coffee/hot chocolate/milkshake

LUNCH

Sandwich with both slices of bread thickly spread with butter/margarine
and a protein food (tuna/chicken/egg/ham) and salad
OR Soup (add double or sour cream/oil) with buttered toast
+ Full fat yoghurt OR dessert pot e.g. Crème caramel/
mousse/rice pudding



AFTERNOON SNACK

Full fat cheese and crackers/crispbread/toast OR handful of nuts and dried fruit + Milky drink (made on enriched milk)
OR glass of fruit juice

DINNER

Meat/fish/chicken
+ Mashed potato (made with butter full fat milk and cheese) + vegetable (tinned/frozen or fresh),
with butter/oil/cream sauce/cheese sauce/gravy

DESSERT

(you can have this at supper time if you wish)
Fruit (fresh/canned) and custard/double or ice cream
OR milky pudding OR slice of cake



NOTE: If you have Diabetes or High Cholesterol speak with your Doctor or Dietitian before starting.