A Guide To Eating Well If You Have A Small Appetite

If you are eating less or have lost weight without planning to, simple changes to your meals and snacks may make a difference. You may be recommended foods that you would think are unhealthy. This is the recommended diet until your appetite improves.

Why do you need to eat well?

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

Helpful Hints!

- Aim for 3 small meals and 2 to 3 snacks a day if your appetite is poor.
- Take drinks after your meal, not before or during as this can fill you up.
- Drinks, snacks and meals can be fortified to make them more nutritious.
- Smoking can reduce you appetite and increase your metabolism, try not to smoke.
- Eating breakfast may help you eat better for the rest of the day.
- Add variety to your diet wherever possible to make meals more interesting.
- Convenience foods can be useful if you find cooking difficult or tiring.

This information sheet gives some general information to help make changes. If more detailed advice is needed please discuss with a Registered Dietitian.

Dietitian:

Contact Details:

Date received:
### Protein foods
- Aim to have 2 portions of protein a day and choose from the following foods:

**Meat, chicken and fish**
- Include at least 75-100g (3-4oz) of meat, chicken or fish if you have a cooked meal.
- Try convenience foods such as lasagne, fish in sauce or shepherds pie.
- For a snack meal include smaller portions of meat or fish in a sandwich or on toast e.g. tinned mackerel on toast or chicken sandwich.

### Cheese and Eggs
- Grated cheese can be added into scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, sprinkled onto a bowl of soup or beans on toast.
- For a snack meal try cheese on toast or cheese or egg sandwiches. (1oz (30g) cheese or 1-2 eggs).
- Have a cheese or egg meal such as macaroni cheese, scrambled eggs, cauliflower cheese or an omelette.
- Try making a cheese sauce to put with vegetables, fish or pasta.

### Beans and Lentils
- Choose lentil or bean soups, or add tinned beans such as butter beans or kidney beans to casseroles or soups.

### Nuts
- Snack on plain, salted, dry-roasted or chocolate covered nuts.
- Add to foods such as casseroles, salads or desserts.

### Dairy Foods
- Aim for at least 1 pint (568 ml) of milk per day.
- Use full cream milk if you are losing weight, or aim for 2-3 portions each day:
  - 1 portion: 1 oz cream
  - 1/3 pint (200 ml) milk
  - 1 pot (125g) of yoghurt.
- Avoid low fat, sugar free yoghurts. Choose thick and creamy varieties.
- Include a milk-based dessert at meals e.g. custard, milk jelly, yoghurt, fruit fools and mousses.

### Fruits and Vegetables
- Fruit and vegetables provide vitamins and minerals. Include small helpings with meals but don’t fill up on these as they are low in protein and calories.
- Frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh.
- Aim for at least one glass of pure fruit juice or squash fortified with vitamin C a day.

### Carbohydrate
- Carbohydrates are starchy foods e.g. potatoes, breakfast cereal, rice, pasta and bread. These are important as they provide fuel for the body and essential vitamins and minerals.
- Wholegrain varieties provide fibre and help to prevent constipation but may be filling so avoid if appetite is small.
- Have at least one portion at every meal: one serving is approximately 1 slice of bread, ½ cup of rice, ½ cup of pasta, 2 egg sized potatoes or a small bowl of cereal.

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Increasing your calories

Calories come from protein foods, fats and oils, starchy foods (bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and breakfast cereals) and sugar. To increase your calorie intake make sure you do the following:

- Add lots of butter or margarine to your foods e.g.
  - Spread thickly on bread and crackers
  - Mash into potatoes or melt on top of vegetables
  - Stir into hot pasta and serve with meat or cheese sauce.

- Do not use “light” or low fat spread.
- Frying foods can add extra calories.
- Roast potatoes and chips are high in calories and are a useful energy.
- Use mayonnaise, salad cream and dressings generously.
- Add sugar to drinks, breakfast cereals or desserts.
- Add jam, honey or syrup to cakes and scones.
- Choose full cream milk instead of skinned or semi-skimmed milk.
- Over the counter enrichment drinks e.g. Complan, Build-Up or Recovery can be used to increase calorie intake.
- Oral nutritional supplements may be recommended by your Dietitian. These will be discussed with you if appropriate.

Fortified Milk

Fortify milk by adding skimmed milk powder e.g. Marvel, Tesco or Sainsbury own brand skimmed milk powder. This increases the protein and calorie content.

Whisk 2-4 heaped tablespoons (50g/2oz) skimmed milk powder into 1 pint of full cream milk.

This milk can then be used to:

- Make milky drinks such as hot chocolate, Coffee, Ovaltine, Horlicks, or cocoa
- Make porridge
- Pour over cereal
- Make sauces e.g. white or cheese sauce
- Milkshakes (try adding fresh fruit and ice cream for a “thick shake”).
- Make into desserts e.g. custard, semolina, rice pudding etc.
Meal and snack ideas for a small appetite

Sample meal plan

**Breakfast**
- Cereal or porridge with full cream or fortified milk, add cream, fruit or honey.
- And/or toast or croissant with margarine / butter and jam.
- Glass of fresh orange juice or piece of fruit with cream.

**Mid morning**
- Scone or pancake with margarine / butter, cream or jam with nourishing drink
- Or glass of enriched milk with biscuit.

**Lunch**
- Macaroni cheese with grated cheese and tomato
- Or creamy soup with grated cheese / cream and a roll or sandwich
- Mousse.

**Mid Afternoon**
- Milky drink and a biscuit or cake
- And/or cheese and crackers.

**Evening meal**
- Chicken pie, potatoes and vegetables
- Or sausages, baked beans and mashed potatoes
- Or any other ready meal
- Trifle or individual dessert.

**Bed Time**
- Hot milky drink e.g. Horlicks, Ovaltine, hot chocolate made with full cream or fortified milk.

Don’t forget to take **SNACKS** between your meals.
- Glass of full cream milk enriched with milk powder and biscuit or cake.
- Bowl of cereal with milk or fortified milk. Add sugar, golden syrup or honey.
- Cheese, baked beans, peanut butter or sardines on toast.
- Cheese and crackers.
- Milky pudding: yoghurt, fruit fool, ice cream, custard, rice pudding.
- Chocolate bar.
- Scones, pancakes or crumpets topped with butter, jam, honey or cheese.
- Peanuts or dried fruit.

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