

Food First Advice

If you have a poor appetite or recently lost weight, you can adopt this ‘food first’ approach to increase your intake of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals. This aims to improve your nutritional status and prevent further weight loss. **There are three daily goals:**

EVERY DAY:
ONE pint of fortified milk,
TWO nourishing snacks, and
THREE fortified meals

1. Fortified Milk

Ensure all the milk you have is whole milk. Fortify it by mixing four tablespoons of skimmed milk powder into one pint (568ml) of whole milk. Mix the powder with a small amount of milk to make a paste, and then gradually add the remaining milk, stirring continuously.

Keep it in the fridge to use throughout the day in drinks, on cereal and when cooking. Aim to use a pint of milk a day.

Nourishing Drink Ideas – drink between meals

- Make a hot chocolate, milky coffee or malted drink (e.g., Ovaltine or Horlicks) with your daily pint of fortified milk.
- High calorie milkshakes (e.g., Nurishment, Nutrament, Huel or Complan (make with whole milk) can be purchased from supermarkets and convenience stores.
- Try making a nourishing drink from your fortified milk from the ideas below:

High Energy Drink Ideas		
Thick Milkshake	Creamy Smoothie	Fortified Soup
<p>Ingredients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200mls fortified milk • 1 scoop of ice cream • 3 tablespoon vitamin fortified milkshake powder <p>Method: Add all the ingredients together and whisk.</p>	<p>Ingredients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200mls fortified milk • 150g whole milk yoghurt or soya yoghurt • 1 banana (or other soft fruit) • 2 teaspoons honey <p>Method: Mix all the ingredients together with a food blender, or mash with a potato masher then whisk until blended.</p>	<p>Ingredients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ can soup • 2 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder • 2 tablespoons of cream <p>Method: Warm the soup in a pan or microwave. When warm gradually add skimmed milk powder and cream, stirring well.</p>

2. Nourishing snacks

Try to have at least **two nourishing snacks** per day: between meals or in the evening. Adopting a ‘**little and often**’ eating pattern by having small meals, snacks or drinks every two to three hours can really **help to increase your nutrient intake**.

Nourishing Snack Ideas:

Try some of the following sweet or savoury snacks between meals:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheese or cream cheese and crackers• Avocado on buttered toast• Bagel or brioche with jam and/or peanut butter• Buttered teacake, crumpet or hot cross bun• Bowl of crisps, nuts or chevda (Bombay mix)• Egg or tuna mayonnaise sandwich• Cocktail sausages or sausage rolls• Small bag of biltong or jerky	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slice of quiche or tart• Falafel balls with dip• Peanut butter on toast• Potato salad with mayonnaise• Tinned mackerel/salmon on toast or crispbread• Savoury pastry or pasty• Pork pie or scotch egg• Boiled egg with buttered soldiers• Croissant & chocolate spread• Hummus with breadsticks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thick and creamy yoghurt• Scone with cream & jam• Buttered fruit loaf or malt loaf• Tinned fruit & ice cream• Flapjack or muesli bar• Whole milk yoghurt with muesli or granola• Rice pudding with cream• Chocolate biscuits or bar• Sponge pudding and custard• Cheesecake slice• Individual cake/muffin or slice of cake
--	--	--

3. Fortify your meals

If you are only able to eat small portions of meals, these can be made more nourishing by adding high energy foods to them. The top tips on the next pages give more advice about improving your food and fluid intake using everyday foods and drink.

To fortify your food, add:

- **Cream or non-dairy alternative** to cereals, porridge, sauces, soups, and puddings
- **Evaporated milk, milk powder or fortified milk** to sauces, custard, jellies, fruit, puddings, milky drinks, mashed potato and scrambled eggs
- **Cheese or cheese alternative** to mashed potato, soups, sauces, baked beans, scrambled egg and vegetables
- **Olive oil, cream cheese, pesto, hummus, tahini, mayonnaise or salad cream** to potatoes, vegetables, soups, pasta, rice and bread
- **Butter or vegetable fat spread** to bread, crackers, scones, scrambled egg, vegetables, sauces, potato, pasta and rice
- **Oil-based salad dressings, oils or mayonnaise** to salads
- **Whole mixed nuts or seeds** to salads or breakfast cereals. **Ground or chopped** nuts or seeds to porridge, cereals, puddings, yoghurt and milky drinks
- **Nut butters, chocolate spread, jam, honey or golden syrup** to porridge, cereals, puddings, yoghurt, milky drinks and bread
- **Pâté, sandwich paste or sandwich filler spread (e.g. egg, meat, fish, chicken, vegan spread)** to salads, bread, scones, crackers, sandwiches
- **Dried fruit, coconut** or a **handful of cereal or nuts** to porridge, yoghurt, tinned fruit with cream or non-dairy alternative

Top Tips to Help with Weight Gain using Everyday Food and Drinks

Try the following tips to improve your food and fluid intake to promote weight gain.

What to eat and drink

Protein, energy (calories) and vitamins and minerals are all essential for health and wellbeing. Follow the points listed here to make sure you are eating well everyday:

- Eat 2-3 portions of high protein foods such as meat, eggs, nuts, beans, pulses, soya or tofu. Eat oily fish twice a week e.g. mackerel, salmon, herring, trout or sardines.
- Eat/ drink 2-3 portions of dairy foods. Opt for full fat versions of cheese, milk and yoghurt, or non-dairy alternatives fortified with calcium such as soya, almond or coconut milk.
- Eat a serving of starchy food at each meal (e.g. bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice).
- Eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables. These can be fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juice.
- Have at least 6-8 glasses/mugs of fluid every day. Choose drinks that contain some nutrition where possible, such as milky drinks (malted drinks, hot chocolate, milky coffee and milkshakes), smoothies or nourishing soup.
- Use some of the ideas on page 2 to fortify your foods to make them more nourishing

Where to get your food and how to prepare it

You may find your energy levels change throughout the day or the week, and sometimes you will feel better than others. Try these suggestions to make preparing meals easier:

- Supermarket online shopping, home delivery services or “click and collect” can make shopping easier for you or ask friends and family for their help.
- Buy a selection of fresh or frozen ready meals for when you are not able to cook.
- Try home delivery meal services such as Meals on Wheels, Wiltshire Farm Foods or Oakhouse Foods.
- Make the most of the ‘good days’ by preparing extra meals to store in the fridge/freezer for the ‘bad days’
- Tins, packets, jars or microwaveable items are easily stored and allow you to prepare quick, simple and enjoyable meals that are high in energy and protein. Examples include:
 - Tinned soups
 - Tinned fish, meat, beans and lentils
 - Microwaveable ready-to-eat rice pouches
 - Microwaveable puddings or tinned sponges
 - Custard or rice pudding pots
 - Spreads e.g. chocolate spread or nut butters.
 - Pesto, long-life sandwich fillers or spreads,
 - Nuts, seeds, dried fruit and cereals

Other things to consider

- Avoid low fat/diet versions of foods and drinks. For example, skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, low fat yoghurt, sugar free drinks or watery soups. See the fortification ideas on page 2 for more information.
- Try not to have drinks just before meals to avoid feeling too full to eat.
- If you have difficulty using cutlery or with coordination, try 'finger foods' such as toast, sandwiches, biscuits, chunks of meat, cheese, vegetables or fruit cut into pieces. See the 'Finger Foods' help sheet for more information
- If you are preparing food for others, remember that as we get older, our taste buds change. Older people may prefer much sweeter tastes than they used to.
- If you have vision problems, or for people with dementia, try using a coloured plate without a pattern so that the food stands out clearly from the plate.
- If you are having swallowing difficulties or choking episodes which can be a very frightening experience, please see your GP who may consider a Speech and Language Therapist referral if appropriate.
- Certain medications can affect your appetite, may make you drowsy or cause adverse responses to food, such as nausea, dry mouth or loss of taste. If you feel this is happening to you, please request a medication review with your GP or pharmacist
- If you are finding it difficult to manage a cup, glass or cutlery an occupational therapist can advise on suitable aids to help you maintain your independence and dignity when eating and drinking.
- If you suffer from constipation, gradually increase your fibre intake by consuming beans, lentils, fruit and vegetables and wholegrain foods, whilst also increasing your fluid intake.
- Check that teeth are sound and that any dentures fit correctly - if not, visit your dentist.
- A small glass of alcohol before eating may help stimulate your appetite. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking alcohol, particularly if you are on medication.
- If the smell of food is off-putting, make sure the room is well ventilated whilst cooking or avoid hot meals for a while. Cold meals can be just as nutritious as hot meals.
- Regular exercise may help to increase your appetite and build up your strength. Start with something easy for you and increase the intensity gradually.

If you have a history of cardiovascular disease, diabetes or stroke you should discuss the advice in this leaflet with your GP or dietitian. If you have diabetes, you can have a moderate amount of sugar containing foods. You may need to avoid large amounts of fruit juices or full sugar soft drinks and monitor your blood sugars more closely. Speak to your GP, nurse or diabetes team for more information.

If you are concerned that you are continuing to lose weight or struggling with your appetite, speak to your GP, community nurse, pharmacist or dietitian.