

Tips for gaining weight

There are lots of reasons why you lose weight such as a poor appetite, nausea, difficulty eating, surgery or illness. Extra nutrition and extra energy (kilojoules/calories) are important to help gain weight.

This fact sheet provides advice on following a high energy and high protein diet to help with weight gain. You can go back to eating normally once you are feeling better and eating more. If you do not gain weight or if you still aren't feeling hungry, it is important to follow up with your dietitian or doctor.

High energy foods

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- > Margarine, salad dressings, oil, cream
- > Juice
- > Jam, honey, sugar
- > Avocado



High protein foods

- > Dairy products – milk, yoghurt and cheese
- > Meat, fish and chicken
- > Eggs
- > Legumes, beans, nuts and seeds



Top seven tips:

- 1. Have small frequent meals and snacks during the day.** Try to eat or drink something every few hours. Three meals and three snacks is a good pattern to follow.
- 2. Include high energy and protein drinks during the day.** For example:
 - High energy milo milkshake – add one scoop of ice-cream and one tablespoon (tbsp) of cream to your milo milk
 - Supplement milk drinks (e.g. Sustagen, Ensure or Pediasure– see your dietitian about these)
 - If you don't like milk drinks choose juice based drinks.
- 3. Add margarine/cream/cheese to your food.** This is an easy way to increase the energy in your diet. See 'How do I add extra energy and protein?' (page 2).
- 4. Choose high energy snacks.** See 'Some meal and snack ideas' (page 3).
- 5. Choose full cream dairy products and use high energy milk.** To make high energy milk, add one–two tbsp skim milk powder to every 250mls of full cream milk.
- 6. Make every mouthful count!** Don't fill up on low energy foods like water, tea, coffee, 'diet' food and drinks or plain fruits and vegetables. Follow the ideas in this fact sheet to increase the energy and protein content of some common low energy foods.
- 7. If nausea is a problem:**
 - Cold foods and drinks may be better than hot as hot foods often have a stronger smell. Try sandwiches, cereals, plain biscuits, jelly and fruit
 - Sip dry ginger ale or flat lemonade slowly and in small amounts to help settle the stomach
 - If you feel unwell first thing in the morning, try some dry biscuits before you get up
 - Eat small amounts of food or drink often (every one–two hours)
 - Don't let your stomach get too full or empty as this will increase nausea
 - Eat and drink slowly
 - If the smell of cooked foods puts you off try to avoid kitchen smells until you are feeling better.



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How do I add extra energy and protein?

Margarine and oil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Add to vegetables (including mashed potato)> Add to rice, pasta and noodles> Spread margarine thick on savoury biscuits and bread> Add to soups	
Cream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Add to milk, on breakfast cereals, porridge, desserts, custard, yoghurt, sauces or soups> Add to mashed potato> Add to fruit> Add sour cream to potato> Add coconut cream to meals	
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Have on crackers/sandwiches> Grate onto vegetables (including mashed potato)> Grate into rice, pasta and noodles> Cut into small blocks as a snack	
Avocado	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Have on crackers, toast or sandwiches> Add in salads> Try guacamole dip	
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Make soups, puddings, custards, desserts or packet mixes with milk instead of water> See high energy milk recipe in tip five 'top seven tips' (page 1)	
Meat and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Include meat, mince, sausages, fish, chicken or tofu> Cook meat and alternatives in oil> Try to include this food group twice a day	
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Try a hard boiled egg as a snack or add to a salad plate> Mash egg with mayonnaise as a sandwich topping> Stir a hard boiled egg through a potato salad> Try omelette, quiche or scrambled eggs with chopped ham and cheese	
Nuts, seeds and legumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Try peanut butter or nutella in preference to jam or vegemite> Try hommus <p>Warning: whole nuts are a choking hazard for young children</p>	
Other high calorie options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Choose honey, jam, nutella and peanut butter for spreads> Choose fruit juice and milk over water> Add flavoured toppings to ice-cream and milk drinks	

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Some meal and snack ideas...

<p>Breakfast ideas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Porridge or weetbix with cream and sugar> Cereal with milk, sultanas and cream> Scrambled eggs with cheese and ham> Peanut butter/jam/honey/nutella on toast> Toasted cheese and ham sandwich> Avocado on toast
<p>Lunch ideas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Cheese, ham and mayonnaise sandwich> Chicken and avocado sandwich> Baked bean and cheese toastie> Mini pizza with meat, cheese and vegetables> Chicken nuggets
<p>Dinner ideas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Meat casserole with mashed potato and grated cheese on top> Chicken cheese and tomato omelette> Tuna Mornay> Macaroni cheese or pasta bake with meat and cheese> Fish fingers and vegetables with margarine on top> Baked potato with baked beans and cheese> Tacos with lots of meat, cheese, sour cream and salad
<p>Snack ideas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Yoghurt, frozen yoghurt, fruche> Yogo, custard> Crackers and cheese> Fruit muffin> Savoury biscuits with dip or cream cheese> Hard boiled egg> Tinned fruit and custard/ice cream> Dried fruit with cut up cheese> Muesli bar> Flavoured milk/milk and Milo/milkshake/smoothie> 2 minute noodles> Cheerios> Cheese on toast> Cream cheese based dip and corn chips> Pancakes, scones, crumpets, muffins, pikelets or toast with spreads (jam, nutella, peanut butter, thick margarine)> Handful of nuts (not for young children)

Note – Children with neutropenia should avoid some foods – For further information talk to your dietitian.

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A sample intake for the day...

- Breakfast:** Cereal with honey, fruit, cream and full cream milk + flavoured milk or juice
OR toast with thick spread of margarine and peanut butter + flavoured milk or juice.
- Snack:** Sustagen/milo/fruit smoothie drink OR full fat yoghurt.
- Lunch:** Sandwich with margarine, cheese or ham and salad + yoghurt OR baked bean and cheese toastie.
- Snack:** Jatz biscuits with cheese or peanut butter and flavoured milk OR custard with cream.
- Dinner:** Meat (fried in oil) with vegetables and mashed potato (with added margarine and grated cheese) OR pasta with meat and grated cheese on top.
- Supper:** Raisin toast with peanut butter and honey + high energy milo milkshake (see table below).

Am I really making a difference?

Adding high energy and protein foods (such as cream, cheese and margarine) to your meals really does make a big difference! The examples below show just how many calories/ kilojoules (KJ) you can add to a typical meal. This is an easy way to increase energy without having to eat lots of extra food!

2 scrambled eggs 160 calories (665KJ)	»» 	»» 2 scrambled eggs + 1 tbsp grated cheese + 1 tbsp margarine 355 calories (1470KJ)
2 weetbix + 250mls milk 290 calories (1200KJ)	»» 	»» 2 weetbix + 250mls high energy milk + 1tbsp cream 390 calories (1600KJ)
200mls milk + 2 tsp milo 150 calories (615KJ)	»» 	»» 200mls milk + 2 tbsp milo + 1 tbsp cream + 1 scoop ice-cream 290 calories (1200KJ)
2 scoops mashed potato 120 calories (490KJ)	»» 	»» 2 scoops mashed potato + 1 tbsp cream + 1 tbsp margarine 300 calories (1230KJ)
½ cup baked beans 95 calories (390KJ)	»» 	»» ½ cup baked beans + 1 tbsp cheese + 1 tbsp cream 245 calories (1015KJ)

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