

Tips for gaining weight for infants and toddlers

Children can be underweight for many reasons. Others are at risk of losing too much weight. For both these groups getting enough nutrition to grow well is important. When infants and toddlers get the right nutrition for their needs it helps them to grow, be healthy and heal more quickly after illness or surgery.

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.

High energy foods

High energy foods

- > Margarine
- > Oil
- > Salad dressings
- > Cream
- > Jam, sugar
- > Honey (> 12 months)
- > Avocado



High protein foods

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



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 expressed breast milk or infant formula - see your dietitian about this.
 - High energy milk drinks made with full cream milk. Add things such as: skim milk powder, milo, cream, ice-cream, yoghurt to make a milkshake or smoothie.
 - Supplement milk drinks (e.g. Sustagen@Kid Essentials® or PediaSure– see your dietitian about these supplements).
- 3. Add margarine/cream/cheese/sauces/dressings/spreads to your food and cook in oil.** 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, 'diet' or low fat 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. Eat a nutritious balanced diet**
 - Make sure to still eat a variety of foods from all the five food groups (breads and cereals, dairy, meat, fruit and vegetables) in order to provide adequate nutrients



Tips for gaining weight

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 (can use sour cream if desire)> Add to fruit> Add coconut cream to meals
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Grate into mashed potato or other vegetable> 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 meals> Try guacamole dip as a snack with crackers
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Make soups, puddings, custards, desserts or packet mixes with milk instead of water
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 snackMash 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...

Breakfast ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Porridge or weetbix/cereal with cream> Scrambled eggs with grated cheese> Peanut butter/jam/honey/nutella/avocado on toast> Toasted cheese and ham sandwich 
Lunch ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Hot meal like shepherd's pie, quiche, spaghetti bolognese etc.> Mashed roast chicken/beef/lamb and gravy with pureed vegetable topped with grated cheese> Cheese, ham and mayonnaise sandwich> Chicken and avocado sandwich> Baked bean and cheese toastie> Mini pizza with meat, cheese and vegetables
Dinner ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Meat casserole with mashed potato and grated cheese on top> Omelet with tomato, cheese, shredded ham and cheese> Tuna Mornay or Macaroni cheese or pasta bake with meat and cheese> Sausages (can remove the skin) with soft potato salad> Fish fingers and vegetables with margarine/cheese on top> Soft baked potato with baked beans and cheese> Tacos/Wraps with lots of meat, cheese, sour cream and salad
Snack ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Yoghurt, frozen yoghurt, fruche, yogo, custard> Flavoured milk/milk and Milo/milkshake/smoothie (for children 12 months or older)> Crackers and cheese> Fruit muffin, homemade slice/biscuits> Savoury biscuits, or soft vegetable sticks with dip or cream cheese> Hard boiled egg> Tinned fruit and custard/ice cream> Dried fruit with cut up cheese> Muesli bar> Cheerios> Pancakes, scones, crumpets, muffins, pikelets or toast with spreads (jam, nutella, peanut butter, thick margarine, ricotta cheese)

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

Remember:

- Regular honey should not be given to infant (less than 12months of age) as it can cause botulism
- Milk as a drink should not be given to infants (less than 12 months of age)

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A sample intake for the day...

- Breakfast:** Cereal or porridge with fruit, cream and full cream milk (high energy milk)
OR toast with thick spread of margarine and peanut butter and high energy milk
- Snack:** Full cream milk made with Sustagen Kid Essentials® or milkshake made with fruit and full fat yoghurt
- Lunch:** Sandwich with margarine, cheese or ham and salad with full fat yoghurt
OR baked bean and cheese toastie
- Snack:** Fruit with custard and cream/ fruit with yoghurt and cream/crackers with margarine and cheese/grilled cheese on toast with margarine
- Dinner:** Meat (fried in oil) with vegetables and mashed potato (with added margarine and grated cheese) OR pasta with bolognese sauce and grated cheese
- Supper:** Raisin toast with margarine and jam/peanut butter and high energy Milo milkshake

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!

1 scrambled egg 75Calories (295KJ)	»»		»»	1 scrambled egg + 1 teaspoon grated cheese + 1 teaspoon margarine 145Calories (609 KJ)
2 weetbix + 250mls milk 290Calories (1200KJ)	»»		»»	2 weetbix + 250mls high energy milk + 1tbsp cream 390Calories (1600KJ)
½ cup milk + 1 teaspoon Milo 100Calories (420 KJ)	»»		»»	125mls full cream milk + 1 teaspoon of cream + 2 tablespoon of yoghurt 175Calories (735KJ)
1 scoop mashed potato/pumpkin/ vegetables 40-60Calories (170-250KJ)	»»		»»	1 scoop mashed potato/pumpkin + 1 teaspoon cream + 1 teaspoon margarine 105-125Calories (440-525KJ)
½ cup baked beans 125Calories (390KJ)	»»		»»	½ cup baked beans + 1 tablespoon cheese + 1 tablespoon cream 275Calories (1155KJ)

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