

Coping with a small appetite



Everyone needs a balanced diet for health. However this can be difficult if you are feeling ill and have lost your appetite.

If you are eating less or have lost weight recently, you may need some extra nourishment. This will mean eating a wide variety of foods and making small changes, which can make a big difference.

A balanced diet is one that gives you everything you need to keep your body working well. The key to a good diet is variety and balance. Try to include foods from each of these food groups, everyday:

- **Carbohydrates** – breads, rice, pasta, potatoes, breakfast cereals, cakes, biscuits and sweets contain carbohydrate and also provide energy, fibre and vitamins. Try to include one serving of starchy carbohydrates per meal.
- **Protein** – meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, nuts, beans and pulses are protein sources and also provide vitamins, minerals and energy. Try to have two servings a day.
- **Dairy products** – full-fat milk, yoghurts and fromage frais, cheese and cream. Use at least one pint of full cream milk daily.
- **Fats** – sources of fat include oil, butter, margarine, cream, salad dressing and mayonnaise. These foods provide energy, and some also provide protein and vitamins.
- **Fruit and vegetables** – are good sources of fibre, vitamins and minerals. Drink a glass of orange juice, grapefruit juice, or squash fortified with vitamin C if you don't eat much fruit.
- **Fluid** – try to include at least 6-8 cups each day (see page 7 for ideas on nourishing drinks).
- Adding some colour to your meal in the form of a salad or vegetable sticks can help boost your vitamin intake.

Note - if you have a vegetarian or vegan diet, a consultation with a dietitian is recommended.

Eat little and often

You may find it helpful to eat smaller amounts but more often. For example, have a small breakfast, lunch and evening meal, but add snacks mid morning,

mid afternoon and at suppertime. If you cannot manage a pudding at meal times, try having it as a snack later in the day.

Helpful ideas

- Try to relax around meal times. Take your time and avoid rushing meals.
- Only put a small amount on a plate, so that meals don't seem too large. Try using a side plate rather than a dinner plate. You can always have a second helping later if you still feel hungry.
- If you are too tired to prepare a meal, try having a light snack or a ready-made meal instead. These are still nutritious.
- If you find cooking smells a problem, avoid the kitchen or use cold or microwaved foods. Perhaps someone else can prepare your food for you. However, you may find that the smell of food helps to tempt your appetite.
- Take drinks after or between meals rather than before so that you do not fill yourself up.
- Milky drinks during the day and at bedtime are nourishing. Try using full cream milk in drinks and on cereals.
- Try serving meals that are attractive and colourful.

Vitamins and minerals

- If you are eating a good variety of foods, you should be getting enough vitamins and minerals in your diet.
- If you are unable to eat well (or are unsure whether you are eating well), take a standard daily multivitamin and mineral supplement. Extra large doses are not necessary.
- If you are concerned please discuss supplements with your pharmacist, doctor or dietitian.

If you are continuing to lose weight or struggling with your intake, please contact your dietitian, doctor or nurse.

Nourishing meals and light snacks

You may find it useful to eat little and often. Try the following ideas for small nutritious meals and light snacks.

Small meals

- **Sandwiches** – these can be made from sliced bread, toast, bagels, baguette, chapatti or pitta bread and filled with cold meats, tinned fish, pate, egg, bacon, cheese, peanut butter, houmous or dahl. Add mayonnaise, pickles, chutneys, salad or avocado to make them more interesting.
- **Snacks on toast** – baked beans, cheese, sardines, eggs (poached, scrambled or fried). Add plenty of butter or margarine and top with grated cheese.
- **Jacket potatoes** – with butter and fillings such as cheese, beans, tuna mayonnaise, chilli con carne, bolognese, houmous or sour cream.
- **Ready-made meals** – these can come frozen, chilled, tinned or boil-in-the-bag and are easily cooked following the instructions.
- **Nutritious soups** – if having soup as a meal, choose one that contains meat, fish, cheese, lentils, peas or beans. Try making soup with milk or adding cream or a small amount of oil and have with a bread roll.
- **Macaroni cheese** – instant or microwave pasta meals with added cheese or ham.
- **French toast** – (egg bread). Try with cheese or ham filling.

Light snacks

- Toasted teacakes, yeast or saffron buns, malt loaf, muffins, crumpets, croissants with butter or margarine. Scones or plain sponge cake, with added cream.
- Breakfast cereals with milk, evaporated milk or cream.
- Full fat yoghurts, fromage frais, Greek yoghurts, mousses or fruit fools. Instant whips, milk puddings, blancmanges or egg custards.
- Bread sticks, crackers and cheese.
- Instant whips/jelly crystals or home made milk puddings made with full cream milk.

- Hot milky drinks, milkshakes, fruit smoothies or other nourishing drinks (see page 6).
- Cheese or cream cheese and crackers.
- Pastry tarts.
- Chocolate, cream or shortbread biscuits.
- Crisps, chocolate, nuts, muesli bars, Bombay mix and savoury snacks.
- Dried fruit such as raisins, sultanas or apricots.
- Savoury snacks with more flavour, such as cocktail sausages, sausage rolls, pizza slices, mini scotch eggs, samosa, pork pie, pepperoni, cheese dippers, quiche or cheese.
- Nachos / tortilla chips with grated cheese and full fat dips, eg humous, sour cream and chives, taramasalata.

Pudding ideas

Puddings should not take the place of a meal, but if you can manage something sweet after a meal here are some ideas:

- Try having a dessert 1-2 hours after a meal in place of a snack. It is easy to buy ready made puddings, tinned, chilled or frozen. Avoid low fat varieties, choose full-fat instead.
- Milk puddings eg rice / semolina / tapioca / custard. These should be made with full cream / evaporated milk / fortified milk. For variety add fresh or tinned fruit, cinnamon or sultanas and brown sugar.
- Jelly served with ice cream or tinned fruit.
- Full fat, thick & creamy or custard style yoghurts, fromage frais, fruit mousse or fool.
- Hot fruit pie or crumble with cream, ice cream or custard.
- Waffles or pancakes with maple syrup and cream or ice cream.
- Cheesecake or sweet pastries with cream.

Quick and easy puddings to make:

- Baked apple or banana with brown sugar and sultanas.

- Whisk a small tin of evaporated milk into a cooled jelly made with ½ pint of water.
- Use custard and stewed fruit to make a quick fruit fool or add chopped banana.
- Banana and chocolate or other favourite confectionery can be chopped into instant whip.
- Full fat Greek yoghurt with honey and soft fruits can be topped with brown sugar and grilled to make a 'crème Brulee'.

Note – adding cream to any pudding will boost the energy content. For convenience try aerosol creams. These keep well in the fridge. Long life cream is also useful.

More ways to make the most of your meal

Try these suggestions to add extra calories and protein to your meals and drinks.

Fortified milk

Add 2-4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to 1 pint full cream milk. Use on cereal, in drinks, sauces and puddings in place of ordinary milk.

To sandwiches, pittas and bagels etc add:

Extra butter or margarine
Mayonnaise
Salad cream
Cream cheese
Cheese spread
Peanut butter

Sauces

Make a cheese sauce to go with vegetables or fish. If you are using a packet mix then add extra cheese

To breakfast cereals add:

Cream
Full fat yoghurt
Evaporated milk
Honey
Nuts
Dried fruit

Include in stews, soups and sauces:

Grated cheese
Beans, lentils
Pureed or minced meat
Dumplings
Croutons
Cream
Chopped cold meats

Serve puddings with:

Custard
Cream, ice cream
Evaporated milk
Jam
Dried fruit
Syrup

To vegetables, potatoes and salads add:

Grated cheese
Butter, margarine
Sauces
Cream
Oils, dressings
Mayonnaise
Croutons

Nourishing drinks

Have milk-based drinks eg hot chocolate, milky coffee, or malted drinks. Complan or Build-up (sweet or savoury) are available from some chemists and supermarkets.

Useful items to keep in reserve

It is a good idea to think about foods that you keep in your cupboards. If you are recovering from illness you want quick, easy foods, which are nutritious but do not require a lot of preparation. Here are some ideas:

- Tinned meat eg corned beef, ham, meatballs, stews, casseroles or curries.
- Tinned fish eg tuna, salmon, pilchards or mackerel.
- Tinned macaroni cheese or ravioli.
- Tinned soups, especially meat, lentil or beans, cream or condensed.
- Tinned vegetables eg peas, sweetcorn, carrots, baked beans or tomatoes.
- Instant mashed potato, tinned new potatoes or tinned spaghetti.
- Breakfast cereals such as porridge, instant oats or muesli, bran flakes or wheat biscuits.
- Cheese biscuits, oatcakes, crackers or crisp breads.
- Sweet spreads such as jam, marmalade, honey and chocolate spreads.
- Tinned custard, rice pudding or fruit in syrup (or juice if you have diabetes).

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