

Dietary advice to help improve nutritional intake

Nutrition & Dietetics
Patient information

How to make every bite count – information for patients at risk of malnutrition

Introduction

During your recent appointment with a health care professional you were asked about your appetite and if you had lost any weight recently. You may have had your weight and height recorded.

This information identified you as being 'at risk' of becoming malnourished. It is important to maintain your weight and prevent any further weight loss to reduce further health problems and to keep you as well as possible. To do this it is important to eat nourishing foods; high in energy and protein.

This leaflet gives you ideas on how to make small changes to help you eat a more nourishing diet and prevent any further weight loss. The following suggestions may help and should be followed until your healthcare professional is happy with your weight.

How to eat a nourishing diet

You should try to:

- Eat 3 small meals each day as well as mid-morning, mid-afternoon and supper time snacks or eat small amounts every 2 – 3 hours.
- Choose high calorie items such as, full cream milk, puddings, pastries, pies, sweets, chocolate, biscuits, nuts, tea cakes, crumpets, scones, crisps, cakes, cooked breakfast and meals with creamy and/or cheesy sauces.
- Avoid 'low fat' or 'diet' products.
- Have at least 1 pudding per day.

- Choose 2 good protein sources each day, such as: meat, fish, chicken, eggs, cheese, nuts, yogurt or beans and pulses.
- Have 1 pint of full cream milk each day.
- Drink 6 – 8 glasses of fluid each day (tea, coffee, fruit juice, milky drinks). Sip on these throughout the day and take drinks after your meals, to avoid filling up on them.
- Fortify your milk (add 4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to 1 pint of full cream milk).

If you have a small appetite

You should:

- Try to eat 'little and often'.
- Try to choose foods you fancy.
- Try convenience foods or ready meals if you are finding cooking difficult or tiring. It may also be a good idea to freeze smaller portions of home cooked meals for convenience.
- Do not try to eat large amounts and over-face yourself.

If you have diabetes

If you have diabetes, sugary items should be avoided. You should choose higher fat foods in order to maintain your weight. A high fat diet is suitable in the short term for those with high cholesterol, as it is more important that you are not losing weight.

Easy to Chew Version

Choose nourishing snacks

- Scone, crumpet, muffin or toasted teacake with butter and jam
- Cheese or peanut butter on toast
- Crackers with butter and cheese or patè
- Bacon sandwich
- Thick and creamy yogurts or mousse
- Cake bar or muffin
- Sausage roll, samosas, pakora, spring rolls or pork pie
- Crisps
- Pot of custard or rice pudding
- Pot of trifle or individual cheesecake
- Flapjack, biscuits, chocolate bar or cereal bar
- Malt loaf with butter.

Quick meal ideas

- Jacket potato with butter, beans and cheese
- Sausage, mash and beans (add butter and cheese to mashed potato)
- Cheese, scrambled egg, beans or spaghetti on well-buttered toast
- Omelette with cheese and ham
- Try tinned, oven ready or microwave meals for convenience (avoid diet brands)
- Sausage roll, corned beef slice, pasty, pork pie, spring roll, samosa or bhaji
- Oven chips or potato waffle with beans and cheese.

Dessert ideas

- Instant desserts: instant whip or custard made with fortified milk
- Tinned: milk pudding, custard, fruit in syrup, sponge puddings
- Frozen: cakes, gateaux, ice cream, ice-lollies, choc-ices, ready to bake puddings
- From the fridge: thick and creamy yogurt, cheesecake, mousses, trifles
- Homemade: crumbles, bread and butter pudding, fruit pies, milk puddings, scones, cakes, halva, kheer and kulfi.

If you need your foods to be easier to chew or swallow

- Choose food that is soft enough to be broken up with the flat edge of a fork, and into a consistency that can be eaten easily
- Avoid foods that are dry, crusty, flaky, sharp or rough
- Try to moisten foods by adding sauces or gravy to savoury food or custard or cream to sweet food
- If your mouth / throat or gullet is sore you would also be advised to avoid foods and drinks that are very hot or very cold, fizzy drinks and alcoholic beverages, foods that are highly seasoned / spicy / very salty, acidic foods such as fruit juices, tomato based meals, citrus fruits, vinegar and relishes, as these things may sting and cause considerable discomfort
- If it is very difficult to swallow, use a hand blender or liquidiser to puree your foods to a soft, smooth texture.

Please note: if you have received advice from a speech and language therapist about your food and fluid texture, please continue to follow their specific recommendations.

Choose nourishing drinks

These recipes provide a similar amount of calories as supplement drinks that are available to buy or get on prescription.

Cup-a-soup

Ingredients:

200ml of full cream milk
2 heaped teaspoons of milk powder
1 packet of cup-a-soup

Method: Mix together milk, milk powder and cup-a-soup. Heat until simmering in a saucepan or microwave.

Nutritional value (approx):

250kcal per cup

Milkshake

Ingredients:

200ml (1/3 pint) full cream milk
2 heaped teaspoons of milk powder
Add milkshake syrup or powder to taste

Method: Whisk milk and milk powder together, add milkshake syrup or powder.

Nutritional value (approx):

230kcal per cup

Variations:

Add 1 scoop of ice cream (extra 115kcal)
Add 1 tablespoon of single or double cream (extra 60/149kcal)

Milky coffee

Ingredients:

150ml (1/4 pint) full cream milk
1 heaped teaspoon of milk powder
4 tablespoons of single cream
1 teaspoon of coffee powder

Method: Mix together milk, milk powder and cream. Heat until simmering in a saucepan or microwave. Remove from heat and add coffee powder.

Nutritional value (approx):

240kcal per cup

Smoothie

Ingredients:

100ml full cream milk
100ml fruit juice (orange/ cranberry/pineapple)
1 heaped tablespoon of milk powder
1 scoop of ice cream
Fruit, for example, 1 banana, 3 tablespoons of berries or 3 pineapple rings

Method: Blend all the ingredients in a liquidiser for 10 - 15 seconds. Serve chilled.

Nutritional value (approx):

390kcal (depending on fruit used)

Hot chocolate / malted milk drinks

Ingredients:

150ml (1/4 pint) full cream milk
1 heaped teaspoon of milk powder
4 tablespoons of single cream
3 heaped teaspoons of hot chocolate, Horlicks or Ovaltine powder

Method: Whisk and heat all ingredients together until simmering in a saucepan or microwave.

Nutritional value (approx):

290kcal per cup

Variations:

Top with squirty cream and a chocolate flake or marshmallows (extra 50kcal)

Yogurt drink

Ingredients:

150ml (1/4 pint) full cream milk
1 pot of thick and creamy fruit yogurt
1 level tablespoon of milk powder

Method: Blend all ingredients in a liquidiser for 10 -15 seconds. Serve chilled.

Nutritional value (approx):

270kcal per cup

Variations:

Top with squirty cream (extra 30kcal)

You can purchase 'Complan' or other similar high energy "milkshake" products and soups from the local supermarket or pharmacy (chemist) if you are unable to make the nourishing drinks.

Try adding extra calories to food

Fats and sugars are high in energy and can be added to foods to increase calories.

This is what you can do to your normal menu to make it higher in energy:

Sample menu

Breakfast:

Cereal - use full cream milk or fortified milk and add 2 teaspoons of sugar

Toast - spread butter thickly and add jam, marmalade, honey or syrup

Have a mid morning snack (see suggestions page 2)

Lunch:

Soup - choose 'cream of soups' and add butter, cheese, cream or crème fraiche

Bread bun or pitta bread

Yogurt - choose thick and creamy yogurt

Have a mid afternoon snack (see suggestions page 2)

Evening meal:

Roast chicken, potatoes and vegetables - add butter, full cream milk, cream or cheese to mashed potato, have vegetables with butter or in cheesy sauces

Curry, rice and naan bread - add coconut milk to the curry

Dessert - try stewed fruit with ice cream, cream, custard or milky puddings

Supper:

(see suggestions)

Hot chocolate – (see nourishing drink recipes pages 2-3)

What if I cannot make my own meals?

Some companies will deliver frozen foods to your door:

Wiltshire Farm Foods

147 Stockton Street, Middlesbrough TS2 1BU

Telephone: 01642 643999

Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm

Oakhouse Foods

Unit 21/22 Riverside Park, Middlesbrough TS2 1RP

Telephone: 01642 221112

Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm

Friarage Hospital Catering Service

Telephone: 01609 762018

(between 8am - 4pm)

Email: stees.cafebarplus@nhs.net

Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

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Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf. This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

If you require this information in a different format please contact Freephone 0800 0282451

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