
Help My Child Gain Weight

Dietary advice for children who need extra nourishment

DO NOT USE



Dietary advice for children who need extra nourishment

Some children grow more slowly than expected. This may be because your child:

- Cannot manage to eat enough food, for example due to a poor appetite
- Has higher energy needs, for example due to medical reasons

Although this can be very worrying, try not to get too anxious about what your child is eating. Your health professional (Health Visitor, School Nurse, GP or Consultant) can refer your child to a Paediatric Dietitian.

Please note that the advice in this leaflet is for children who need extra nourishment, therefore it is not recommended for the whole family.



What can I do to help?

If your child has a poor appetite it is important to offer small meals and snacks – give 3 meals and 3 nutritious snacks each day

If your child is only able to manage small amounts at mealtimes, follow the “Energy boosting tips” to make sure that these foods contain as much energy as possible

Offer more foods higher in fat and sugar – rather than low fat, low sugar or diet varieties

Offer small portions of food as children with poor appetite can be put off by larger portions – a second helping can be given, if requested

Eating a combination of foods from each food group will give your child all the nutrients they need. Your child also needs extra energy from foods that are higher in fat and sugar

Always offer a savoury and dessert course at each mealtime

Make meals colourful and interesting

Try not to make a fuss if your child does not eat and never force your child to eat as this often makes things worse

Make mealtimes a relaxed occasion, avoiding too much focus on how much is being eaten

Fruit and vegetables

Always try to offer fruit and vegetables with most meals and snacks. They provide vitamins A and C, fibre and some contain a little iron. Avoid overcooking or soaking vegetables because this can destroy some of the nutrients.

Generally, fruit and vegetables do not contain much energy and can be quite filling, so always try to offer high-energy foods at the same time.

- Try mashed avocado spread on cracker bread with some black pepper
- Melt margarine or butter over vegetables. Roast vegetables in oil as an alternative to boiling
- Try grating or melting full-fat cheese over vegetables
- Add double cream or extra butter to vegetable soups
- Serve sticks of raw vegetables with dip or hummus
- Add dried fruits such as dates or raisins to cereal or porridge
- Try to serve fruit with any of the high-energy foods, for example:
 - Bananas with cream or fromage frais
 - Stewed fruit with full-fat custard or evaporated milk
 - Apple crumble with custard or ice cream
 - Fruit, such as strawberries, dipped in chocolate



Constipation

Constipation can contribute to poor appetite. To prevent this:

- Offer fruit and vegetables regularly with the high-energy foods, as these are a good source of fibre
- Make sure that fluid intake is adequate by checking that your child is drinking enough water
- Encourage wholegrain breads and cereals rather than giving lower fibre alternatives
- However, do not give your child bran as it can interfere with the absorption of essential minerals such as calcium and iron



Energy boosting tips

- Add chopped tomatoes with avocado on tortilla chips with grated cheese and have with a creamy dip
- Serve a cheese sauce (made with full-fat milk and full-fat cheese) with vegetables, for example cauliflower cheese or broccoli bake
- Top pizzas with vegetables and make sure you add extra cheese
- Add salad oils or dressings to salad vegetables

Top
tips

