

Ways to Gain or Maintain Weight (High Calorie Diet)

It can sometimes be hard to eat enough food to maintain your weight, or to gain weight. If your doctor and/or Registered Dietitian have advised you to gain weight or maintain your weight, and you are struggling to do this, try the following tips to increase the calories you eat each day.

Here are some suggestions:

- Do not skip meals.
- Add snacks between your meals and at bedtime.
- Keep ready-to-eat foods & snacks around the house and on the go.
- Set an alarm on your stove or phone for every 2 – 3 hrs as a reminder to eat
- Plan meals around your energy level. If you are most energetic in the morning, make breakfast as your biggest meal.
- Consider cooking extra batches of favorite foods when you have time.
- Try liquid supplements or make your own high-calorie shakes.

To maintain weight, you may have to eat or drink when you don't feel hungry. So, make everything you eat and drink count!

High Calorie Beverage Ideas

- Drinking extra calories can sometimes be easier than eating.
- Use high calorie drinks in place of water. Drink fruit juices (apple, orange, cranberry or others), apple cider, sports drinks, fruit punch, lemonade, Kool-Aid®, or chocolate milk.
- If you like milk, drink whole milk instead of low fat or nonfat milk.
- Try supplements such as Ensure®, Boost®, Carnation Breakfast Essentials®, or others. Most stores also carry their own brand, which can save you money! The regular versions generally contain 250 calories per serving. The “Plus” versions of these products contain about 100 more calories per serving.
- Try making homemade milkshakes and smoothies.
- You can also add the following items to whole milk or nutrition supplements to add even more calories and protein: ice cream, instant breakfast powders, protein powder, dry milk powder, syrups, or other flavored powders.

Ways to Add Calories to Every Bite

Change to full fat dairy.

- Use whole milk or evaporated milk for drinking and preparing cream soups, custards, puddings, and milkshakes. Half and half can also be used, but won't provide as much protein.
- Use whole milk yogurt or kefir instead of the low- or non-fat kind. Flavored or fruited varieties have even more calories.
- Use whole milk/full fat versions of cottage cheese and sour cream.

Use butter often.

- Add to vegetables, rice, potatoes, noodles, and breads. Noodles and rice are good fried.
- Use in hot cereals.
- Put on sandwiches, bread, and crackers.
- Cook meats, fish, poultry, or eggs in oil or butter.

Fortify your breakfast.

- Use lots of butter, maple syrup, honey, and nut butters (peanut, almond, cashew, etc.) on toast, hot cereals, pancakes, waffles, and French toast.
- Make hot cereals with whole milk or cream. Mix in coconut oil or coconut cream for extra flavor and calories.
- Add nuts (especially good when toasted) and dried fruits to hot cereals and muffins.
- Add cream or half and half and cheese to scrambled eggs and cook with butter.

Dress up your bread.

- Add jam, jellies, Nutella®, or honey to bread, toast, or rolls.
- Use mayonnaise whenever possible – put it on both sides of your bread for sandwiches. Whole fat cream cheese makes a great mayonnaise substitute too.
- Use liberal amounts of peanut butter, whole milk cheeses, cottage cheese, or cream cheese. Add them to breads, bagels, or rolls.
- Avocado is a great addition to any sandwich.

Add protein to everything.

- Add hard cooked eggs to vegetables and casseroles.
- Nuts and sunflower seeds provide calories and protein; eat as a snack or add them to salads, cookies, muffins, hot cereal, yogurt or ice cream.
- Fortify milk by adding dry milk powder: 1 cup powder to each quart of milk. This can be used to make soups, gravy, cereals, shakes, etc.

Add toppings!

- Enhance meats, pasta, and vegetables with gravies (especially if protein-fortified), cream sauces (example: alfredo) or cheese sauces.
- Add avocados to sandwiches, tacos, and salads, or smash them to make guacamole. They are also good on their own as a high calorie snack or side.
- Add shredded or grated cheese, cream cheese or sour cream to your favorite foods.
- Dried fruits like raisins, dates, cherries, apricots, and pineapples are delicious alone or added to salads, cookies, muffins, and hot cereal. Use with nuts and chocolate chips to make trail mix.