

Your important health information

High energy high protein diet

Good nutrition is particularly important if you are ill or undergoing treatment. Sometimes the effects of treatment or illness can make it difficult to eat all that your body needs. This guide provides information about foods that are high in energy and protein. These foods can assist in meeting your nutritional needs and help you to maintain your weight and activity levels.

How do you increase your nutritional intake?

The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Take advantage of your best time of day. For example if you feel hungry in the morning, have a cooked meal for breakfast. If you feel tired and unable to eat in the evening, have your main meal at lunchtime.
- If you can't eat a lot, try to eat more often. Aim for 6 small meals each day rather than three large ones.
- Make every mouthful nourishing. Instead of tea, coffee or water, drink fluids such as milkshakes, smoothies or juices.
- Keep a supply of snacks handy such as cheese and biscuits, dried fruit or nuts. Try to make up for days where you don't feel well by including extra snacks on better days.
- When planning a meal use the "adding" principle to increase the energy and protein content. Some examples are adding cream or egg to soup, butter or cheese sauce to vegetables and honey or jam to bread.

Choosing your food

It is important to eat foods from all the food groups. The following guide offers ideas to increase your nutrition during food preparation.

1. Protein foods

Meat, poultry and fish

- Fry meat, poultry or fish with butter/margarine/oil.
- Add gravies or sauces.

Eggs and plant-based alternatives

If meat, fish or poultry are not eaten on a daily basis, it is important to include other high protein foods such as eggs, legumes, lentils, tofu or nuts.

- Eggs can be boiled, poached, scrambled or fried, made into omelettes or quiches or added to salads. Beaten egg can be added into hot soup.
- Add lentils, kidney beans or tofu to soups, stews and casseroles or try baked beans for an easy meal.
- Add nuts to desserts or cereals or eat as a snack.

Aim for two to three serves of high protein foods each day.

One serve = 65g cooked meat, 80g cooked poultry, 100g cooked or canned fish, 2 large eggs, 1 cup cooked or canned legumes/lentils, 170g tofu, 30g nuts, seeds or nut/seed spread such as peanut butter.

2. Dairy products

- Includes soy and lactose free products. Note that almond, rice and oat milks are much lower in energy and protein.
- Use full cream milk and dairy products instead of low fat.
- Make milkshakes with ingredients such as ice-cream, yoghurt, honey, flavoured toppings or fruit. Alternatively add Milo, Ovaltine, Akta-Vite or Nesquik to plain milk drinks.
- Include meals with white sauces for example tuna mornay or lasagne and use cheese sauce on vegetables.
- Add grated cheese to soups, pastas, egg dishes and salads.
- Yoghurt can be included as a snack or added to many savoury or sweet recipes.
- Cream can be added to desserts, cereals, soups, mashed vegetables, pastas, egg dishes and drinks.
- Include dairy desserts such as ice cream, custard, milk puddings, rice pudding, crème caramel, mousse or fruche.

Fortified milk recipe

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup (75g) skim milk powder
- 2 cups milk

Method

Sprinkle powder onto milk and mix until dissolved. Fortified milk is best if made a couple of hours before using. Store in refrigerator and use in place of regular milk.

3. Breads and cereals

- Add butter/margarine to bread and spread on both sides of a toasted sandwich.
- Add honey, peanut butter, hummus, Nutella or jam to bread, crackers or plain biscuits.
- Use fortified milk and add sugar, honey, nuts, yoghurt or fruit to breakfast cereals.
- Add creamy sauces or butter/margarine/oil to cooked rice/pasta/noodles.
- Make French toast with eggs, cream and butter.
- Eat raisin or fruit toast with butter/margarine as a snack.

4. Vegetables

- Use fresh, canned or frozen vegetables.
- Add grated cheese, butter/margarine or creamy sauces to cooked vegetables.
- Add mayonnaise, oil or cream-based salad dressings to salads.
- Add milk powder, milk, butter/margarine or cream to mashed vegetables.
- Make vegetable soup with cream, sour cream or evaporated milk.

5. Fruit

- Use fresh, cooked, canned or dried fruit.
- Serve with yoghurt, custard, cream or ice cream.
- Eat dried fruit as a snack.
- Use in milkshakes/smoothies.
- Drink fruit juice.
- Add avocado to salads and sandwiches or on toast or crackers.

6. Butter, margarine and cooking oil

- Use on vegetables, bread, rice and pasta and in cooking.

Some ideas for nutritious meals and snacks

Breakfast

- Cereals –wholegrain cereals, porridge or muesli with milk/fortified milk. Try adding sugar, honey, golden syrup, nuts or dried fruit.
- Fruit – orange juice, banana on toast/cereal or dried fruit on cereal.
- Cooked dishes – egg, bacon, baked beans or tinned spaghetti.
- Bread – wholemeal toast, buttered with jam, honey, peanut butter or avocado.

Light meal

- Soup – add grated cheese, cream, chopped chicken or meat, barley, beans or lentils.
- Meat – add to toasted sandwiches, soup or egg dishes.
- Eggs – cooked on toast, as an omelette or cold with salad vegetables and mayonnaise/dressing.
- Bread – sandwich/toasted sandwich with butter, margarine or avocado.
- Fruit – fresh, juiced or stewed with cream, ice-cream, custard or yoghurt.

Main meal

- Cooked dishes – meat, poultry or fish with sauces or gravies. If meat is unappealing try eggs, cheese, tofu or legumes.
- Vegetables – potato mashed with butter/margarine, milk or fortified milk and at least two vegetables with added butter, cheese or sauce.
- Rice/pasta/noodle dishes – made with coconut milk/creamy sauces.
- Desserts – puddings or fruit with cream, ice-cream, custard or yoghurt.

Nourishing snacks

- Dry biscuits with dip or cheese.
- Mixture of dried fruit, nuts and chocolate.
- Peanut butter, jam, honey or banana on bread/dry biscuits.
- Celery with cream cheese or peanut butter.
- Fruit and yoghurt, custard or ice cream.
- Fruit bars, muesli or breakfast cereal bars.
- Fruit, carrot, banana, sponge or chocolate cake.
- Milk based drinks such as milkshakes, fruit smoothies, Milo or iced coffee.
- Boiled egg.
- Toasted sandwich.
- Fruit bread/muffin with butter or margarine.
- Scones or pikelets served with jam and cream.

Fluids

Drink plenty of fluids including water, fruit juices, milk drinks, soup or other liquids every day. If you feel full quickly, avoid drinking large amounts of liquid one hour before and after meals. This will allow you to eat more.

High energy and protein supplement drinks such as Sustagen, Ensure, Resource or Fortisip/Fortijuice may be advised by the dietitian.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:
Dietitian
Mercy Hospital for Women
Phone: 03 8458 4165
Werribee Mercy Hospital
Phone: 03 8754 3150

Acknowledgements

Produced by: Nutrition and Dietetic Department MHW
Date produced: December 2016
Date of last review: December 2018
Date for review: December 2020