



Making the most of every bite

Tips to help you get more calories and protein from food

'I often skip meals because I don't feel hungry'

'I feel full soon after I have started eating'

'I have lost weight without trying to'

This information is for adults only and should be used under the supervision of a healthcare professional. If you have a medical condition such as renal disease or diabetes, problems with swallowing or food allergies it may not be suitable for you.

This dietary information was developed by members of the HSE community dietitian national malnutrition working group with input from other groups in Ireland including community nurses, general practitioners and patients. The tips and advice are based on experience of what has worked for some people and may be helpful to you.

If your appetite does not improve, ask your doctor to arrange an appointment for you to see a dietitian.

Why do I need more calories and protein?

Calories in food are what give your body energy. Protein is known as the 'building block' of the body, helping it build, repair and maintain strength.

How can I make sure I get enough calories and protein in my diet?

Eat little and often

Try to eat something every 2-3 hours when you are awake. The best way is to eat small amounts of food regularly.

Aim for three small meals as well as 2-3 snacks each day. See later in this leaflet for some meal and snack ideas.



Eat high-protein foods

Aim to have high-protein foods as part of each meal or snack. Good sources of protein are meat, chicken, fish, eggs, milk, cheese and nuts. You can also get protein from pulse vegetables like peas, beans and lentils.

Avoid 'diet' foods

Avoid foods that say they are low calorie, 'light', low-fat, reduced fat, reduced sugar or 'diet' foods.

Eat dessert

Have a dessert every day. Try milk pudding, full fat or Greek yogurt, sponge cake and custard, trifle, jelly with ice cream, or stewed fruit with custard.

Take nourishing drinks

Try to have at least six cups of nourishing drinks, like milkshakes or smoothies, each day. Be careful not to fill up on drinks like tea or coffee, or packet soups. Aim to use one pint of full-fat milk each day. Or try the homemade fortified milk recipe available to read or to watch on www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

Ask your doctor, nurse, dietitian, or pharmacist about taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement.

Make your food more nutritious – ‘food enrichment’

You can increase calories and protein by adding any of the items below to your meals and drinks.

Skimmed milk powder

You can add 1-2 heaped tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to:

- milky drinks like hot chocolate;
- coffee drink sachets like cappuccino;
- milk puddings;
- smoothies; and
- milk-based sauces.



Cheese

You can use grated cheddar, sprinkled parmesan, or other options like cream cheese in main meals or snacks.

Sugary foods

You can use sugar, jam, honey, or maple syrup to sweeten breakfast cereals or smoothies. You can also drizzle them on pancakes, or add them when baking or making desserts.

Fats, oils, spreads and sauces

You can use rapeseed oil, sunflower, or safflower oil to fry and roast, and you can drizzle olive oil over foods like bread or pasta.

You can add double cream to many hot and cold dishes, for example, soups, desserts, risotto, curry, stew and casserole.

In meals or snacks you can use:

butter, full-fat spreads, mayonnaise or pesto. These go well in sandwiches, on mashed potatoes and in salads. To pasta or vegetables, you can add: cream-based sauces, white sauces, cheese sauce, or gravy.

Nuts (source of fibre and protein)

With nuts you can:

- eat them whole or chopped and add them to breakfast cereals or smoothies;
- use chopped or ground nuts when baking cakes or muffins; and
- mix finely chopped nuts with breadcrumbs for a crunchy coating on chicken or fish.

If you have difficulties swallowing, it is essential that you consult your speech and language therapist before trying any of the foods outlined in this leaflet.

Snack ideas

Aim to have 2-3 snacks each day between meals.

Cheddar cheese

30g with 2 cream crackers.

Beans

Half a small tin of beans on 1 slice of toast with butter.

Peanut butter

1 tablespoon of peanut butter on 1 slice of toast.

Hummus

- 3-4 breadsticks with 2-3 tablespoons of hummus; or
- half a pitta bread with 2-3 tablespoons of hummus.

Ice-cream

2 scoops of ice-cream with tinned fruit in syrup.

Yogurt

- 150g of yogurt:
- custard style;
 - Greek style; or
 - high-protein yogurt.

Sweet bread

- Slice of treacle bread and butter or banana bread and butter.

Nutrition per portion	
Calories	Protein
Approx. 200 kcals	5-10g protein

Bagel

Half a bagel with smoked salmon (30g) and:

- half a medium avocado; or
- cream cheese (40g).

Packet mix

- Bombay mix (40g); or
- mixed nuts (30g)

Puddings

- Ready-made milky puddings;
- canned rice pudding;
- custard;
- trifle pots; or
- crème caramel.

Scone

Half a scone with butter and 1 teaspoon of jam.

Recipe and snack ideas

Lots of recipes for meals and snacks are available in the 'Making the most of every bite' cookbook available to view at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.