

Eating well with a small appetite

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Do you have a small appetite?

Your appetite can change for a variety of reasons including medications, illness and age. However, it is still important to get all the nutrients from your diet to maintain health.

If you are eating less or smaller portions, it is important that your diet is as nourishing as possible to help you stay healthy.

Handy hints

Try to follow the steps below every day to help maintain a good nutritional intake:

- Eat three small meals plus 2-3 snacks or milky drinks per day.
- Use at least one pint (600ml) of full cream milk or calcium enriched plant based milks daily.
- Have at least 6-8 cups (1.5 to 2 litres) of fluids per day. Drinks can include: tea, coffee, fruit juice, squash, soups, milky drinks, smoothies and water.
- Avoid drinking before meals to ensure you don't feel full up at mealtimes.
- Have a source of protein at least twice per day at meals such as meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese, yoghurt, nuts, beans, lentils or tofu.
- Base your meals around starchy carbohydrates such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta or cereals. Choose wholemeal options where possible.
- Include fruit and vegetables daily.
 - Fresh, frozen, canned or dried are all good options.
 - If you struggle to eat fruits and vegetables, try drinking a glass of fruit juice or squash with added vitamin C.

Enriching food

You can add extra nourishment to foods by enriching them with simple ingredients.

Milk

- You can enrich milk by adding four tablespoons of skimmed/dried milk powder to one pint (600ml) of full fat milk. This adds an extra 200 calories and 20 grammes of protein to a pint of milk!
- You can use this milk to make coffee, hot chocolate, malted drinks, sauces, packet soups, milk puddings, porridge and cereals.

Milk- based sauces

- Add cream, evaporated milk and/or grated cheese.

Breakfast cereals

- Use enriched milk, evaporated milk, yoghurt, syrup, honey, jams or sugar.
- Serve with fresh or dried fruit and/or nuts.

Puddings

- Serve with cream, full-fat creamy yoghurts, evaporated milk, custard, condensed milk or ice-cream.
- Add jam, lemon curd, honey, syrup or dried fruit.

Soup

- Mix in cream, dried milk powder, baked beans, pasta, evaporated milk or crème fraiche.
- Top with grated cheese, dumplings or croutons.
- Serve with bread and butter or spread.

Potatoes and vegetables

- Add spread/butter, oil, grated cheese, soft cheese, cream, salad cream, mayonnaise, milk-based sauces or fried onions.

Increasing your calories

- Spread/butter, oil and sweet foods such as syrup, jam and honey can provide extra energy and calories and help food to taste better. These can be used generously with a variety of meals.
- Have a pudding once or twice a day such as full-fat yoghurts, trifle, ice-cream, cake, fruit pie, crumble, sponge-puddings with custard or cream and ready-made desserts.

- Cakes, pastries, biscuits, chocolates and crisps are all high in calories and make great snacks to have throughout the day for an extra calorie boost.
- Avoid low-calorie, 'light' or 'diet' foods.
- Have full-fat dairy products.

Quick and nourishing foods and snacks

Sandwiches

- Use cold meat, bacon, tinned fish, cheese, eggs, nut butters, hummus or ready-made sandwich fillings.
- Try different types of bread and rolls for variety.
- Add extra flavour with pickles, relish and sauces.

Snacks

- Toast with: pâté, tinned fish, baked beans, cheese, tinned spaghetti with cheese, eggs, nut butters, chocolate spread or avocado.
- Soup made with enriched milk and added cream or cheese with a sandwich or bread.
- Crackers or digestive biscuits with margarine/butter and cheese.
- Toasted crumpets or teacake with margarine/butter and jam/marmalade.
- Tortilla chips with soft cheese spread or dip.
- Mini sausage rolls.
- Mini spring rolls.
- A bowl of breakfast cereal with enriched milk.
- Full-fat yoghurt and fruit.
- Fruit cake/malt loaf and butter.
- Chocolate - covered biscuits and cake bars.
- Individual apple pie, Bakewell tart or tray bakes.

Meals

Try to include vegetables with each of the meals below.

- Bacon and egg with tomatoes and toast/ sausages with baked beans and bread or canned potatoes.
- Oven-ready fish or fish fingers with chips and peas or baked beans.

- Kippers or smoked haddock with bread and butter.
- Macaroni cheese with tomatoes.
- Jacket potatoes with cheese or beans.
- Cauliflower cheese.
- Corned beef hash.
- Canned stew or casserole with instant mashed potato.
- Pasta with sauce and cheese.
- Boil-in-the-bag fish and sauce.

Desserts

- Full-fat yoghurt
- Tinned fruit with ice-cream or evaporated milk.
- Cake.
- Ice-cream.
- Mousse.
- Milk puddings e.g. milk jelly or custard.
- Individual desserts.

Nourishing drinks

Nourishing drinks are a great way to get in extra calories and protein between meals.

- Make hot drinks such as malted milk drinks, cocoa, drinking chocolate or milky coffees made with enriched milk.
- Add cold milk to:
 - Blackcurrant juice
 - Milk-shake flavourings or powders
 - Mashed banana and full-fat yoghurt
 - Fruit, cream and ice-cream to make milk-shakes
- High calorie enriched drinks are sold in chemists and supermarkets as powders or ready to drink. These may be taken as a drink between meals.
- Frequent hot drinks are comforting and warming. You may like to have a flask beside you during the day so you can take a hot drink when you need it.

Making eating easier

- If you find cooking difficult or tiring then you may find it useful to use ready meals and convenience foods.
- You may be able to have meals-on-wheels or frozen meals delivered.
- If you have dental problems or dentures that are impacting on your eating then contact your dentist.

Store cupboard ideas

Having some basic convenience foods available in the store cupboard can be helpful if you struggle to get to the shops because of bad weather or illness.

Milk

- Long-life/UHT, dried or tinned evaporated milk.
- Cans or pots of milk puddings such as custard or rice puddings.

Drinks

- Cocoa powder, hot chocolate or malted milk drink powders.
- Fruit squash enriched with vitamin C.

Meat, fish and alternatives

- Canned meat such as corned beef or ham.
- Canned fish such as tuna, sardines, salmon, mackerel and pilchards.
- Canned pulses such as beans and lentils.
- Ready-made or canned meals such as mince, stews, casseroles, curries and pies.
- Packets of tofu.

Fruit, vegetables and fruit juice

- Canned or cartons of fruits and vegetables.
- Dried fruit, pots of fruit, long-life fruit juice.

Cereals and other starchy foods

- Breakfast cereals and porridge oats.
- Crackers, crisp breads, plain biscuits and oatcakes.
- Dried pasta, rice and packets of instant mashed potato.

Other

- Canned or packets of soup.
- Stock cubes and yeast extract.
- Fruit loaf, sponge biscuits and tinned/packet puddings.
- Sugar.
- Preserves and spreads such as jam, marmalade, nut butters or chocolate spread.

Tips

- Only buy foods you like and will use.
- Check the use-by dates on cans and packets regularly.
- Some tins will have a pull-ring for easier opening.

Freezer ideas

The list below provides some examples of foods that can be stored in the freezer and used when desired:

- meat, fish and Quorn
- chips, mashed potatoes and baked potatoes
- pizza
- fish fingers or chicken nuggets/goujons
- ready meals such as stew, casserole, lasagne or fish pie
- extra portions of homemade meals
- bread
- frozen fruits and vegetables
- puddings or ice-cream
- milk

Nutritional supplements

If the dietary changes made in this booklet don't help to achieve better nutritional intake, your doctor may prescribe food or drink supplements that are taken in between meals. Your dietitian can also advise on whether these would be necessary.

It is recommended that adults in the UK should take a 10 microgramme (400IU) vitamin D supplement daily throughout the winter months. If you have less exposure to the sun during the summer months, then it is recommended to continue to take the 10 microgramme vitamin D supplement all year round to help support bone health.

Speak with your pharmacist or dietitian to discuss whether you should take a vitamin D supplement.

Suggested meal plan

Breakfast

Porridge made with enriched milk with syrup/honey/sugar and added fresh/tinned/dried fruit

Or

Two slices of wholemeal toast with spread/butter with scrambled eggs made with added cream served with a glass of fresh fruit juice.

Mid-morning

Milky drink made using enriched milk

Or

Nourishing snack such as full fat yoghurt and fruit

Lunch

Sandwich made with two slices of wholemeal bread, butter/spread and a filling of your choice served with a dressed salad

Or

Jacket potato with butter/spread topped with beans and cheese and served with a dressed salad

Pudding e.g. full fat yoghurt, trifle, mousse, jelly and ice-cream

Mid-afternoon

Milky drink made with enriched milk

Or

Nourishing snack such as cheese and crackers with butter/spread or cup of packet soup with a slice of wholemeal bread with butter/spread

Evening meal

Tinned or home-made stew/ casserole with mashed potato and vegetables with extra butter/spread

Or

Meat/fish with potatoes of choice and vegetables with extra butter/spread

Pudding e.g. steamed pudding with custard/cream, yoghurt with fruit, tinned rice pudding

Bedtime snack

Milky drink made with enriched milk and a biscuit

Or

Cheese and crackers with butter/spread

Or

A crumpet with butter/spread and jam

Plant-based food fortification

We have a separate information sheet available with plant-based foods, snacks and calorie boosters. Please ask your dietitian for further information.

Further information

If you have any queries about your diet, please do not hesitate to contact the dietetic team.

Dietetic Department
North Devon District Hospital
Barnstaple

Telephone: 01271 322306 (Monday – Friday)

Useful websites

British Dietetic Association food fact sheet on malnutrition

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/malnutrition.html>

British Dietetic Association food fact sheet on Vitamin D

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html>

Malnutrition Pathway - Your Guide To Making the Most of Your Food - Advice for patients and carers

<https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers>

Malnutrition Matters

<https://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/eating-well>

References

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Public Health England (2014) McCance and Widdowson's the composition of foods. 7th edn. London: HMSO

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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