

Eating well with a small appetite

A guide to help improve your appetite and prevent weight loss

Introduction

If we do not eat enough food we lack the essential nutrients our body needs.

We need:

Energy Protein Fats Vitamins Minerals

Energy and protein are the building blocks that our body requires. Vitamins and minerals are also involved in all our body functions, to help maintain health and prevent illness.

A reduced daily dietary intake of important nutrients can lead to weight loss causing weakness, deterioration of health and a longer recovery from illness.

This leaflet aims to help you improve your dietary intake if your appetite is poor or you are concerned about your weight.

This booklet can be used if you have lost weight due to a medical condition or just do not feel like eating much.

Tips to help improve your eating

- Eat small frequent meals – try to eat little and often.
- Small snacks between meals can help to increase your daily dietary intake.
- Try to aim for 3 small meals and 2-3 snacks per day
- A milky drink or high calorie shake can be a beneficial snack or drink between meals.
- Avoid low fat or low calorie products.
- Drinking just before a meal can sometimes fill you up. Try to sip drinks slowly during a meal or after.
- If you smoke, try not to smoke before a meal. This can affect your appetite.
- Getting some fresh air before eating can stimulate your appetite.
- A small amount of alcohol before a meal may help improve your appetite. Always check with your doctor if it is safe to have alcohol.

Ideas for enriching your food

Take fortified/enriched milk:

To make, add three to four tablespoons of milk powder to one pint of full fat milk.

Breakfast cereal

Try adding:

- dried fruit
- honey
- jam
- sugar
- syrup
- evaporated milk
- enriched milk

Potatoes, rice and vegetables

Try adding:

- cream
- olive oil
- margarine
- butter
- mayonnaise
- salad cream
- grated cheese
- cream cheese

Soup

Try adding:

- milk powder
- cream
- beans
- pasta
- dumplings
- grated cheese

Sandwiches

Try adding:

- pickle
- relish
- salad dressing
- butter
- avocado
- mayonnaise
- peanut butter

Puddings

Try adding:

- cream
- syrup
- custard
- ice cream
- honey
- jam

High energy meal ideas

Many meals can be bought from a local supermarket. These can be quick and convenient to use. Some examples are given below. Avoid low fat or healthy eating varieties.

Ready made meals

- lasagne
- spaghetti bolognese
- mild curry, for example, korma
- shepherds pie
- stew and dumplings
- cauliflower cheese
- dahl

Light meals

- fish in sauce (boil in the bag)
- macaroni cheese
- cauliflower cheese
- fish fingers
- quiche or pie
- omelette
- egg, baked beans or pilchards on toast

Sandwiches or baked potato

Sandwich fillers such as:

- egg mayonnaise
- grated cheese
- baked beans
- tinned fish
- pate

Puddings

- thick and creamy yoghurts
- sponge cake and custard
- ice cream and jelly
- milk puddings
- mousse or trifle pots
- cheese and cracker biscuits

Puddings can also make a useful snack, if you cannot manage a pudding as part of your meal, save it for later.

Vitamins and minerals

Vitamins and minerals are an important part of our diet whether we are healthy or unwell. They help our body to function correctly.

Vitamins and minerals are found in a wide variety of foods. Here are some ways to help you increase the amount in your diet:

- Drink a small glass of fruit juice with one of your meals.
- Try a fortified cereal for breakfast or as a snack.
- Try adding tinned vegetables or a handful of frozen vegetables to a stew or casserole.
- Use tinned or stewed fruit as a snack or as a pudding with ice cream, cream or custard.
- Add some tomato or a small amount of salad to a sandwich.

Please remember when your appetite is poor or you are trying to prevent weight loss, vegetables should only take up a small portion of your plate at a mealtime.

Points to remember

- Lots of chewing can be tiring. Therefore soft food may be better for you. Adding sauces and/or gravy to a meal can also be beneficial.
- A small amount at each meal is of more benefit than nothing at all.
- Some supplement drinks such as build up shakes can be useful to increase your calorie and protein intake. These can be bought from your local chemist and some supermarkets. They come in different flavours.



If you are continuing to have problems with your eating or are concerned about your weight please ask your GP, community nurse or dietitian for further help.

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All dietitians employed by South West Essex Community Services are state registered with the Health Professionals Council.



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