

# Eating well with a small appetite



**Information for patients**  
Sheffield Dietetics



In hospital and in the community

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## **Introduction**

The following information has been put together to offer tips on coping with a small appetite. When your appetite is poor it is important to choose nourishing foods and fluids to prevent or reduce weight loss.

## **Additional Information**

If you have diabetes some of this information may not be suitable. Please ask your doctor or community nurse or dietitian about this.

If you experience swallowing difficulties or cough when eating or drinking, this information may not be suitable. Please ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to the speech and language therapy department.

## **Hints for coping with a small appetite**

- Aim for five to six small meals a day
- Choose high protein, high calorie foods (examples are given in this booklet)
- Choose full fat, full sugar products if you cannot eat your usual portions
- Aim to have one pint of full fat milk a day. This can be in drinks, cereals and puddings.
- You may find ready made meals or easily prepared foods are easier to eat
- Avoid over-facing yourself with large portions - use a small plate at mealtimes
- Ensure you have enough fluid every day - aim for six to eight glasses a day, nutritious fluids (listed on page 9) are better than water, tea and coffee

# Easy to prepare meal ideas

## Breakfast

- Porridge/Ready Brek made with full fat milk or added cream
- Cereal with full fat milk
- Toast with butter or margarine and jam, honey, marmalade, lemon curd or peanut butter
- Egg on toast with butter or margarine (scrambled, poached, fried)
- Beans on toast with butter or margarine
- Bacon sandwich with butter or margarine

## Lunch

- Sandwiches - tuna, ham, beef, cheese, egg, potted meat or meat paste. Add butter or margarine, mayonnaise, pickle or salad cream to these
- Cheese, beans, eggs or tinned fish on toast
- Creamy soups for example cream of chicken, cream of tomato, top with grated cheese or add cream
- Jacket potatoes with butter or margarine, beans, cheese, chilli, stew or tuna

## Evening meal

- Microwave meals, for example cottage pie, lasagne, fish pie, toad in the hole
- Tinned stew or casserole with rice or potatoes and vegetables
- Ready made meat or vegetable pie with potatoes and vegetables
- Corned beef hash

- Mashed potato with sausages and beans
- Oven ready fish/fish fingers with peas and oven chips
- Spaghetti bolognese
- Fish in sauce with potatoes or rice and vegetables
- Omelette with cheese and ham or tomato
- Tinned macaroni cheese

**Please note that lunch and evening meals can be interchangeable and remember to add margarine, butter, cream, mayonnaise to food wherever possible**

## **Puddings**

- Rice pudding, custard, blancmange, semolina, tapioca
- Full fat yoghurt, fromage frais, Greek style yoghurt
- Mousse, trifle, crème caramel, egg custard, milk jelly
- Sponge pudding with custard, cream or evaporated milk
- Fresh / tinned fruit with ice cream, cream, custard, or evaporated milk
- Fruit crumble or fruit pie with custard or cream or evaporated milk
- Cheese cake
- Ice cream

**Snack ideas** (combine these with food fortification ideas later on)

- Piece of cake, malt loaf and butter or margarine, fruit bread
- Plain or fruit scone with butter, margarine or cream and jam
- Crumpets or muffin with butter or margarine and jam or cheese
- Currant bun or toasted teacake with butter or margarine
- Toast with butter or margarine and jam, honey, marmalade, lemon curd, Marmite or peanut butter
- Handful of nuts, crisps or dried fruit
- Biscuits or cereal bar
- Crisps, tortilla chips, cheese biscuits or breadsticks with hummus, cream cheese dip or guacamole
- Crackers, rich tea biscuits or digestive biscuits with butter and cheese, honey or peanut butter, or cream cheese and jam
- Full fat yoghurt, milk puddings or trifle
- Chocolate bar
- Bowl of cereal
- Bowl of soup
- Sandwich
- Cheese and apple cubes
- Choc ice/ice cream bars
- Grilled or baked cocktail sausages
- Sausage rolls or mini quiche
- Mini pork pie or cheese and onion pie

## **Adding extra nourishment to your food**

If you can only eat small amounts at a time or have lost weight recently, then it is important to ensure you have enough protein and energy in your diet. Here are some ideas to add extra nourishment to your food.

**Breakfast cereals** - add one or more of the following to breakfast cereals:

- Full cream milk
- Full fat yoghurt
- Golden, maple or fruit syrups
- Soft or smooth pureed fruit in syrup
- Cream
- Evaporated milk / condensed milk
- Honey
- Sugar

**Creamed potato** - add one or more of the following to mashed potato:

- Butter or margarine
- Cream
- Full fat yoghurt
- Full cream milk
- Grated cheese, cheese spread or cream cheese

**Vegetables** - add one or more of the following to vegetables:

- Butter or margarine
- Grated cheese
- olive oil or rapeseed oil

**Soups and Sauces** - add one or more of the following to soups and sauces:

- Cream
- Grated cheese
- Full fat yoghurt
- Soft cooked rice or pasta
- Extra meat, poultry or pulses such as lentils or beans
- A well cooked egg

**Puddings** - add one or more of the following to puddings:

- Cream
- Ice-cream
- Jam
- Full fat yoghurt
- Fromage frais
- Golden, maple or fruit syrup
- Soft or pureed fruit
- Honey
- Sugar
- Evaporated or condensed milk
- Dessert sauces



## **Nourishing fluids**

Fortified milk - add four tablespoons (2oz or 55g) of dried milk powder to a fresh pint of full fat milk. Begin by making a paste then add further milk. This can be used to make custard, instant desserts, milk puddings, drinks, porridge, soups or sauces.

- Malted drinks (for example Ovaltine or Horlicks), hot chocolate, milky coffee
- Milkshakes or smoothies
- Creamy soup
- Complan or Meretine soups or shakes (available to buy in most supermarkets or chemists)

Other supplements are available such as Nurishment, Nutrament, Sanatogen high protein powder and whey protein based shakes (such as body building products), these are usually high in energy and / or protein which will help to boost intake but are often not nutritionally complete. Check with your doctor or dietitian to see whether these will be suitable for you.

## **Supplement drinks**

You may be given prescribable supplements by your dietitian or doctor. These should be taken in between meals. Your dietitian can give you more ideas on how these can be used.

## **Additional tips**

- Allow friends and family to assist / join you at mealtimes
- Use ready prepared meals and convenience foods if this is easier for you
- Sit down while preparing and eating meals
- Ensure you have a well stocked freezer or store cupboard
- Avoid cooking smells, eat in a separate room
- Choose foods you enjoy
- Avoid drinking during meals, if you can't avoid this choose nourishing drinks
- It may be helpful to weigh yourself regularly. If your poor appetite continues and your weight continues to fall, please contact your doctor or community nurse for advice

## Notes / Action Plan

This information has been given to you by:

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Contact number:

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Date

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