



## Patient/carer information: Food First - Eating well for small appetites

### Why do I need this advice?

Many older people or people with some long term conditions are at risk of malnutrition because they cannot, or do not, eat enough food to meet their body's needs.

Malnutrition increases risk of illness and makes it harder for the body to fight infection and heal itself, so it will take longer to recover from any illness. Malnutrition can also reduce energy levels, muscle strength, mobility and can weaken the heart.

The most common type of malnutrition in the UK is "protein-energy" malnutrition – which just means that not enough protein or energy (calories) is eaten.

**To treat protein-energy malnutrition our bodies need us to increase the amount of protein and energy (calories) which we eat every day.**

People who are at risk of malnutrition will generally need to eat at least another 500 calories per day (in addition to their current intake) to stop losing weight and/or to help them regain weight. An increased protein intake can generally be achieved by choosing snacks and drinks containing protein as well as protein foods at meals.

**Treating and preventing malnutrition can be very simple, and normal food plays a big part – this approach is known as 'food first'.** Food first just means using ordinary foods to increase intake of all the nutrients your body needs. The following advice aims to help you to do this.

### What about healthy eating?

When someone is at risk of malnutrition, 'normal' healthy eating guidelines (eating a diet low in fat and sugar, avoiding snacking between meals etc) **do not apply**. The advice that follows is healthy eating for someone at risk of malnutrition, but may not be healthy for their family and friends.

Some of the following advice recommends eating more foods that are high in fat. Many people who have malnutrition worry that if they eat more high fat foods that this will harm their heart. However, malnutrition itself is a big risk to heart health, so treating malnutrition can actually help to strengthen your heart.

### Leaflet provided by:

.....

Profession:.....

Contact number:.....

.....

Date:.....



## What do I need to eat?

Our bodies need us to eat a range of different foods every day.

These include:

- Starchy carbohydrate such as bread, pasta, rice, cereals, potatoes
- Protein such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans/lentils, Quorn, soya
- Milk and milk containing foods such as yogurt, fromage frais, cheese
- Fruit and vegetables
- Fluid

For people with small appetites it can sometimes be difficult to eat enough of these foods. However **there are many simple changes that can help make sure that you can eat enough to meet your body's needs.**

- Aim to eat an extra 500 calories every day. The following information will show you the energy content of many common foods and drinks

- **Try to eat little and often during the day**
  - Aim for about 3 small meals and 2-3 between meal snacks each day
- Try to have 2-3 portions of high protein foods (see above for examples) every day. In addition try to have foods and drinks based on milk, as milk is also a good source of protein
- Try to have a serving of starchy food (see above for examples) at each meal
- Try to have some fruit and vegetables every day – aim for 5 small portions per day
- **Use full fat milk and fortify it** (increase its energy and protein content) by mixing 3 - 4 tablespoons dried skimmed milk powder into each pint of milk
  - Try to take about 1 pint of this fortified milk each day by using it where you would use ordinary milk (with cereal; in tea, coffee, hot chocolate and milkshakes; in custard etc)

- **Try to drink at least 6-8 glasses/mugs of fluid every day.** Try to choose high energy drinks from the list overleaf
- **Avoid low fat, low sugar and diet foods and drinks**
- Try homemade supplements (recipe overleaf) or commercial supplements such as Complan or Build-Up between meals (Build-Up is available in neutral, sweet and savoury flavours and Complan is available in neutral and sweet flavours) in between meals, with or instead of snacks
- If your appetite is very small or you cannot eat a range of different foods it is a good idea to take a once-a-day multivitamin and mineral tablet and 'own brands' are not expensive. These are available from most supermarkets and pharmacies. Consult your GP or a Pharmacist to check this will be safe to take with other medications

### How can I make mealtimes easier?

- If cooking is difficult for you or your carer, try ready prepared meals from the supermarket or delivered to your door e.g. Wiltshire Farm Foods (0800 773 773) or Oakhouse Foods (0845 643 2009). Meals on Wheels may also be available in your area
- **Avoid drinks with or shortly before a meal/snack** to avoid feeling too full to eat
- A small alcoholic drink before a meal can help to stimulate your appetite and is also high in energy, but make sure that it is safe to drink alcohol with any medication that you are taking
- **Serve small portions** as these can be easier to manage than larger portions – you can always go back for a second helping

- **Choose foods which you know you enjoy**
- If you are a slow eater, **give yourself enough time to eat your meals and snacks**. To keep your food warm while eating try to serve hot food on a warmed plate or try commercially available heated dishes or plate warmers
- **Try to eat with others** as this can help to encourage appetite, and try to make sure that your dining environment is as pleasant as possible
- The expression “we eat with our eyes” is true - **try to make sure that your meals and snacks look appealing** (try to choose a variety of colours, flavours and textures) as appearance of food can affect appetite

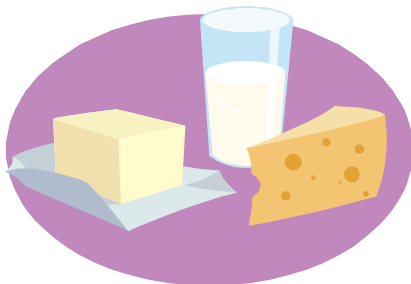
### How can I increase the energy and protein in my food?

**If you have a small appetite, fortifying foods - by adding extra energy, protein and other nutrients to them - can make it easier for you to eat enough every day.**

- **Breakfast:** Try fortifying breakfast cereal with fortified milk, cream, sugar, dried fruit, ground almonds, evaporated milk, syrup or honey
- Try fortifying bread or toast with plenty of butter or margarine and jam, marmalade, lemon curd, chocolate spread or cream cheese
- **Main meals:** Try fortifying meat dishes with grated cheese, cream cheese, mayonnaise, skimmed milk powder, butter/margarine, cream, or milk based sauces
- Try fortifying potatoes and vegetables with milk based sauces made with fortified milk, cream cheese, mayonnaise, grated cheese or butter/margarine,
- Try fortifying puddings with honey, syrup, condensed milk, ice cream, cream, evaporated milk or custard made with fortified milk
- **Lighter meals:** Try fortifying soup with cream, skimmed milk powder, evaporated milk or grated cheese
- Try fortifying sandwiches with plenty of butter/ margarine, mayonnaise or cream cheese in addition to sandwich fillings

This table shows the amount of energy and protein that can be added using everyday food items:

Fortifier	Amount	Energy content (calories)	Protein content (grams)
Butter or margarine	10g 'pat'	75	0
Cheese, grated	1 tablespoon	40	2.5
Chocolate, grated or melted	1 square	35	0.5
Coconut milk powder/ creamed coconut	1 tablespoon	103	1
Coconut (desiccated)	1 tablespoon	60	0.5
Condensed milk	1 dessert spoon	55	1.5
Cream cheese	1 tablespoon	66	0.5
Cream, single/double	1 tablespoon	30/100	0.5
Crème fraiche	1 tablespoon	100	0.5
Dried fruit	1 tablespoon	85	0
Dried skimmed milk powder	1 tablespoon	55	5.5
Egg, pasteurised	1 'egg'	75	6
Evaporated milk	1 tablespoon	25	1
Greek yogurt	1 tablespoon	61	2
Ground almonds	1 tablespoon	60	2
Halva	1 tablespoon	137	3.5
Honey	1 teaspoon	50	0
Hot drink powder e.g. Horlicks, Ovaltine etc	4 teaspoons	75	1.5 - 2
Ice cream	1 scoop	105	2
Jam	1 teaspoon	50	0
Milk/cream based sauces	1 tablespoon	45	1
Milkshake powder	4 teaspoons	60	0
Mayonnaise	1 tablespoon	105	0
Peanut butter	1 dessert spoon	75	2.5
Sugar	1 teaspoon	25	0
Sweet sauces	1 tablespoon	60	0
Syrup	1 teaspoon	50	0



## Which snacks should I choose?

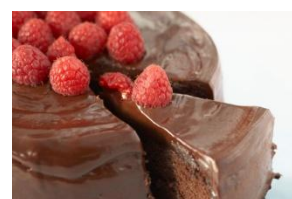
- Even the smallest snack can help boost your energy and protein intake
- Try to have 2 - 3 small snacks each day as well as your meals and try to **choose a variety of different snacks**

This table shows the amount of energy and protein that some common snacks contain:

Snack	Amount	Energy content (calories)	Protein content (grams)
Cocktail sausage	1	29	1.5
Milk chocolate	1 square	36	0.5
Mini sausage roll	1	54	1.5
Cream biscuit	1	63	0.5
Digestive biscuit*	1	70	1
Mini Scotch egg	1	72	3.5
Chocolate digestive	1	89	1
Chocolate mini roll	1	97	1
Rice pudding**	1 small tub	102	4
¼ sandwich with pate*	½ slice bread + thick spreading pate	111	4
Cheese & cracker*	1 cream cracker + small chunk cheese	112	5.5
Mini pork pie	1	118	3
Chocolate biscuit	1 individually wrapped	120	1.5
Peanuts	1 dessert spoon	120	5
Custard**	1 small tub	122	3.5
Crisps	1 small packet	133	1.5
Malt loaf with butter	1 slice	138	2.5
½ scone with butter & jam	½ scone	143	1.5
Cereal bar	1	154	3.5
½ toasted teacake with butter	½	167	2.5
Trifle	1 small tub	188	3
Flapjack	Small piece	197	2
Thick and creamy yoghurt**	1 pot	230	5
Custard tart	1 small	260	6

\*Energy content can be increased by fortifying with butter or margarine

\*\*Energy and protein content can be increased by fortifying with dried skimmed milk powder



## What about drinks?

- **Try to choose mainly high energy drinks** from the table below, rather than lower energy drinks like water, tea, sugar free squash or sugar free fizzy drinks
- **High energy drinks can make a big difference to your energy and protein intake**

High energy drinks per 200ml (1 small mug)	Energy content (calories)	Protein content (grams)
Complan*	310	12.5
Homemade supplement (Milk shake made with fortified milk)	277	15.4
Horlicks*	235	9
Ovaltine*	230	8.5
Build-Up*	224	12
Fortified milk*	200	12.5
Milkshake*	200	7
Hot Chocolate*	180	7
Bournvita*	170	8.5
Cocoa*	168	7
Full Fat Milk	140	7
Milky coffee*	140	5
Fortified soup	115 – 170	Depends on fortification
Fruit juice	65 – 120	0
Smoothie	100	0.5
Sugary fizzy drink	85	0
Sugary squash	50 - 90	0

\*Made with full fat milk

### Homemade supplement recipe (*milkshake made with fortified milk*)

Makes 1 x 220ml portion

180ml full fat milk

2 tablespoons/30g dried skimmed milk powder

4 teaspoons/20g milk shake powder (choose a brand that has added vitamins and minerals)



Mix all ingredients together until milk powder and milkshake powder have dissolved.

(Approximate cost per milkshake = 33p. Prices obtained from large, national supermarket on 7/6/13)

**Following the advice in this leaflet should help you improve your food intake and prevent further weight loss.**

If you are not able to follow this advice or you are still losing weight, contact your Dietitian, District or Practice Nurse or GP for further support.

<b>Developed by</b>	Alison Smith, Prescribing Support Dietitian, Aylesbury Vale & Chiltern CCGs in collaboration with Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust Community Dietitians
<b>Date ratified</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2013 (Medicines Management JET)
<b>Review date</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2016