

# How to increase the protein in your diet

**Nutrition and Dietetics Department**

## Who is this leaflet for?

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The information in this leaflet is for you if you:

- Do not have enough protein in your diet
- Have higher protein needs
- Are recovering from an operation
- Have a wound that is not healing
- Have a pressure (bed) sore
- Have lost a lot of weight in a short space of time
- Have an infection

## Why is it important for me to increase the protein in my diet?

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Proteins are the building blocks of the body. They are essential for making new cells, such as blood cells and hormones, and also help to repair old cells. They help with wound healing and keep your muscles strong. When you are unwell your body needs more protein. It is therefore important to make sure that you are eating enough protein in your diet to help you get better.

The tips and information in this leaflet will show you which foods are high in protein. It will help you to add more protein to your diet.

Note: If you are not sure if some of the suggestions in this leaflet are right for you, please contact your dietitian to discuss other options or for advice.

## How much protein do I need?

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The amount of protein that your body needs will depend on how much you weigh. It also depends on your overall health. Your dietitian will be able to help you with this.

Healthy adults need about 1g per kilo of their body weight of protein each day. So, for example, if you weigh 60kg, you will need to eat about 60g of protein every day to meet your requirements.

If you are unwell or have lost a lot of weight and muscle, you may need more protein than a healthy adult. Your protein needs will also be higher if you have recently had an operation or a wound that is not getting better.

My daily protein needs are: \_\_\_\_\_

## Which foods contain protein?

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Protein is mostly found in the following foods:

- Meat
- Fish
- Eggs
- Dairy foods (e.g. milk, yoghurt)
- Legumes and pulses (e.g. lentils, peas, chickpeas, yellow split peas)
- Beans
- Nuts
- Soya and soya products (e.g. tofu)
- Quorn® and Quorn® products.

If you are vegetarian or vegan it is important you choose plenty of alternatives to meat and fish. These include soya, tofu, pulses, beans and nuts.

## What if I need to eat a healthy diet?

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If you are a healthy weight or need to lose weight, have diabetes or high cholesterol, some of the options in this leaflet may not be suitable for you. Always make sure that you are choosing the low fat and low sugar options.

- Choose lean cuts of meat
- Opt for fish and white meat (e.g. chicken, turkey)
- Use beans, pulses and legumes in your cooking
- Use low fat or fat free yoghurts
- Use skimmed, 1% or semi skimmed milk
- Make sure your portion sizes are not too large
- Try to avoid snacking between meals.

NB. Fruit and vegetables are quite low in protein and are not included in this leaflet. It is important to eat them as part of a healthy diet. They are full of vitamins and minerals, and can also help prevent constipation.

## How can I include more protein in my diet?

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- Use milk in drinks and in cooking (instead of water) as much as possible
- Choose high protein snacks during the day (e.g. yoghurt, nuts, houmous)
- Include protein rich foods in all of your meals (e.g. meat, fish, eggs, pulses, beans)
- Make sure you finish the protein on your plate before eating the potato, rice and vegetables
- Substitute water or juice drinks with milk or milky drinks
- If you are vegetarian always include a meat alternative (e.g. tofu, soya, Quorn®, eggs, beans, pulses)
- Swap rice, potatoes and pasta for high protein alternatives (e.g. quinoa)
- Blend cashews or peanuts with water or milk to make a sauce
- Add a tin of beans or lentils to vegetable casseroles and soups
- Sprinkle roasted nuts and seeds on salads and pasta dishes
- Add roasted nuts and seeds to grain dishes (e.g. cous cous, quinoa)
- Use yoghurt or cream based sauces and dressings with salads.

**Try to enrich food and drinks by adding extra ingredients using the table below:**

<p>Add skimmed milk or pea protein powder to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Milk (see recipe on page 11)</li> <li>■ Porridge</li> <li>■ Mashed potato</li> <li>■ Sauces and soups</li> <li>■ Custard and milky puddings</li> <li>■ Milkshakes</li> </ul>
<p>Add fortified or whole milk to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cereal or porridge</li> <li>■ Puddings</li> <li>■ Hot drinks, milkshakes or smoothies</li> <li>■ Soups and sauces</li> <li>■ Mashed potato</li> </ul>
<p>Add ice cream, yoghurt or frozen yoghurt to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cereal</li> <li>■ Milkshakes or smoothies</li> <li>■ Stewed, tinned or fresh fruit</li> <li>■ Fruit pies and crumbles</li> <li>■ Jelly</li> </ul>

<p>Add extra eggs or egg yolks to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Puddings</li> <li>■ Sauces</li> <li>■ Quiches</li> <li>■ Custard</li> <li>■ Pancakes</li> <li>■ Milkshakes</li> </ul>
<p>Add grated hard cheese, crumbled feta or ricotta to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sauces and soups</li> <li>■ Mashed potato or pasta dishes</li> <li>■ Vegetables and salads</li> <li>■ Pizza and quiche</li> <li>■ Scrambled eggs, omelettes or soufflés</li> <li>■ Beans and spaghetti on toast</li> </ul>
<p>Add nuts and seeds to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cereal and porridge</li> <li>■ Crumble mixes</li> <li>■ Salads</li> <li>■ Bread, pancake and cookie mixes</li> <li>■ Toppings instead of breadcrumbs</li> <li>■ Fruit and deserts</li> <li>■ Ice cream, yoghurt and frozen yoghurt</li> </ul>

<p>Add beans, chickpeas and lentils to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Soups</li> <li>■ Salads</li> <li>■ Casseroles</li> <li>■ Rice and cous cous</li> </ul>
<p>Add peanut butter and other nut butters to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bread or toast</li> <li>■ Crumpets and muffins</li> <li>■ Waffles and pancakes</li> <li>■ Milkshakes</li> <li>■ Porridge</li> <li>■ Curry sauces</li> <li>■ Ice cream and yoghurt</li> </ul>

## What should I eat for breakfast?

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- Eggs: scrambled, poached, omelette, frittata, eggy bread
- Granola or muesli with extra nuts and seeds with natural yoghurt
- Grilled bacon or kippers on toast
- Sausages and grilled tomatoes
- Peanut, almond, cashew or hazelnut butter on toast
- Baked beans on toast
- Porridge or Ready Brek® made with milk  
(use the fortified milk on page 11 for extra protein)
- Fresh or tinned fruit with natural yoghurt  
(add nuts and seeds for extra protein)



## What should I eat for my main meal?

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Always include a rich source of protein in all of your main meals such as meat, fish, eggs, pulses or beans. Ideas include:

- Fish with a white, parsley or cheese sauce made with milk
- Fish pie
- Fish cakes
- Vegetarian casserole with added butter beans, chickpeas or kidney beans
- Quorn® or soya mince dishes
- Pasta dishes with a white or cheese sauce
- Lasagne (meat or vegetarian made with lentils or beans)
- Curries with added chickpeas or lentils
- Cauliflower cheese
- Beef Stroganoff, goulash or casserole
- Chicken casserole, fricassee, roast chicken
- Irish stew
- Chilli con carne (with kidney beans) and rice
- Meatballs with pasta
- Shepherd's pie, cottage pie
- Pork, beef or Quorn® sausages.

## What should I eat for a snack meal?

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- Sandwiches with a protein-rich ingredient (e.g. chicken or turkey slices, lean ham, pâté, tuna, salmon, egg mayonnaise, prawn mayonnaise, bacon, cheese, cheese spreads)
- Beans on toast with grated cheese
- Egg on toast
- Sardines, mackerel, salmon or tuna on toast
- Small jacket potato or sweet potato with left over beef, Quorn® or soya mince, chilli con carne, prawn mayonnaise
- Falafel, sausage roll, scotch egg, or mini pork pie
- Soup (e.g. oxtail, chicken, lentil).

## What snacks are best for between meals?

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- Nuts and seeds
- Houmous with bread sticks or carrot sticks
- Cheese straws, cheese twists
- Mini sausage roll, scotch egg, quiche, pork pie
- Quorn® or pork cocktail sausages
- Slice of cold chicken or other meat
- Individual cheese portion or Cheese Strings®
- Yoghurt (natural or flavoured)
- Small pot of fromage frais or children's yoghurt
- Frozen yoghurt
- Small pot of rice pudding
- Small pot of custard
- Cereal bars containing nuts and seeds.

See drinks ideas on page 12 for other snack options.

## What should I eat for dessert?

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- Milky puddings (e.g. rice pudding, semolina, tapioca, sago)
- Milk jelly (made with milk or evaporated milk)
- Fresh or tinned fruit with added custard (made with milk) or natural yoghurt
- Cheesecake
- Ice cream (dairy based or soya based)
- Yoghurt or frozen yoghurt
- Small pot of fromage frais or children's yoghurt.

## What should I drink?

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### **Use milk generously.**

- Milk is an excellent source of protein. Cow's milk and soya milk have the most protein. Unfortunately almond, hazelnut, rice and oat milks are not good sources of protein. If you are unable to tolerate lactose, lactose-free milk is a better source of protein than plant-based milks.
- Have at least 1 pint of milk each day. Use in drinks, on cereals or to make milky puddings and sauces.
- Use evaporated milk to make custard, milk jellies and milk puddings.
- Add 2-4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder or pea powder to each pint. Mix a little milk with the powder to make a paste and then stir as you add the rest of the pint.
- If you are eating a healthy diet always use skimmed, 1% or semi skimmed milk.

## Drinks that are high in protein

Try to have at least 8-10 cups/6-8 mugs of fluid per day to prevent dehydration. Spread them evenly through the day and try to include some of the high protein options below.

- Cold milk, milkshakes, iced coffee or yoghurt drinks
- Hot milky drinks (e.g. coffee, hot chocolate, cocoa, malted milk, Ovaltine®, Horlicks®, Milo®)
- Nesquik® or Complan Shakes®, malted milk drink, hot chocolate
- Coffee or tea made with evaporated milk
- Smoothies with added yoghurt or evaporated milk.

## Protein content of foods

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Use these tables to choose foods that are high in protein. You will also be able to use the tables to work out how much protein you are eating, and if you are getting enough for your protein needs. (Values are based on the average protein content of the foods in the list and are correct at time of going to press.)

Food	Portion Size	Protein per portion (g)
<b>Dairy</b>		
Cow's milk	1/2 pint	10
Soya milk	1/2 pint	9
Lactofree® milk	1/2 pint	10
Evaporated milk Nestle Carnation®	4 tbsp (60ml)	4
Condensed milk Nestle Carnation®	1 tbsp (15ml)	1
Horlicks®	25g with 200ml milk	2
Ovaltine®	25g with 200ml milk	2
Dried skimmed milk powder	1 tsp	2
Double cream	1 tbsp	1

Single cream	1 tbsp	1
Cheddar cheese	30g	8
Parmesan cheese	30g	8
Feta cheese	30g	5
Goat's cheese	40g	7
Camembert	30g	6
Mozzarella	1 tbsp (40g)	7
Cottage cheese	1 tbsp (40g)	4
Soft cream cheese	1 tbsp (40g)	3
Babybel®	mini Babybel® (20g)	5
Cheese Strings®	1 string (20g)	5
Laughing Cow® (triangle soft cheese)	1 triangle	3
Cheese straws/ cheese twist (biscuits)	3 straws/3 twists	3
<b>Eggs and egg products</b>		
Eggs	1 egg	7
Egg mayonnaise	2 tbsp (50g)	5
Quiche Lorraine	1/4 quiche (100g)	12
Cheese and onion quiche	1/4 quiche (100g)	8
<b>Meat</b>		
Chicken breast	1 medium (130g)	31
Chicken thigh	1 medium (100g)	18
Lamb mince	1 portion (140g)	24
Lamb chop	1 medium (100g)	18
Leg of lamb	3 slices (100g)	18
Pork mince	1 portion (140g)	28
Pork loin steak	1 portion (120g)	24
Beef mince	1 portion (140g)	28
Beef steak	1 portion (100g)	21
Pork sausages	1 sausage	6
Frankfurter	1 sausage	5

Back bacon	2 rashers	10
Streaky bacon	2 rashers	6
Cooked ham	1 slice (20g)	4
<b>Fish and seafood</b>		
Boneless salmon	1 fillet (125g)	23
Haddock	1 fillet (140g)	24
Cod	1 fillet (140g)	25
Seabass	1 fillet (90g)	18
Smoked mackerel	1 fillet (90g)	19
Cooked and peeled prawns	1 portion (100g)	17
Smoked salmon	1 slice (30g)	7
Tinned salmon	1 medium can (125g)	26
Tinned sardines (drained)	1 can (120g)	21
Tinned tuna (drained)	1 medium can (120g)	3
<b>Vegetarian choices</b>		
Tofu (soyabean curd)	100g	8
Soya mince	75g	14
Quorn® mince	140g	20
Quorn® chicken style pieces	100g	14
Quorn® sausages	1 sausage	7
Quorn® mini eggs	1 egg (20g)	3
Pea protein powder	1 tbsp	8
Soya protein powder	1 tbsp	9
Hemp soya powder	1 tbsp	5
<b>Beans and pulses</b>		
Dried lentils (e.g. green, red)	2 tbsp (30g) unsoaked/uncooked	7
Dried split peas (e.g. yellow, green)	2 tbsp (30g) unsoaked/uncooked	7
Dried chickpeas	2 tbsp (30g) unsoaked/uncooked	6

Tinned chickpeas (drained)	1/3 400g can	6
Dried beans (e.g. borlotti, black eye, cannellini, pinto)	2 tbsp (30g) uncooked	7
Tinned beans (e.g. red kidney, butter, cannellini, borlotti (drained))	1/3 400g can	7
Baked beans	1/2 200g can	5
Broad beans	3 heaped tbsp	6
Frozen soya beans	3 heaped tbsp	10
Frozen peas	3 heaped tbsp	5
Frozen edamame beans	3 heaped tbsp	7
Quinoa	30g uncooked	4
<b>Nuts and seeds</b>		
Peanuts	10 whole	4
Cashew nuts	10 whole	2
Almonds	6 whole	3
Hazelnuts	6 whole	2
Brazil nuts	3 whole	2
Walnuts	6 halves	3
Pistacchio nuts	10, kernels only	2
Pine nuts	1 tbsp	2
Pecan nuts	1 whole	1
Pumpkin seeds	1 tbsp (25g)	8
Sunflower seeds	1tbsp (15g)	3
Sesame seeds	1tbsp (12g)	3
Golden linseeds	1tbsp (10g)	2
Chia seeds	1 tbsp (10g)	2

<b>Ready meals</b>		
Beef lasagne	1/2 pack (350g)	33
Macaroni cheese	1 pack (400g)	29
Cottage pie	1/2 pack (400g)	23
Shepherd's pie	1/2 pack (400g)	20
Cauliflower cheese	1 pack (350g)	15
Chicken roast dinner	1 pack (400g)	27
Tuna pasta	1 pack (450g)	40
Chicken Tikka massala (no rice)	1 pack (350g)	47
Tortellini (spinach & ricotta)	1/2 pack (150g)	12
Tortellini (ham & cheese)	1/2 pack (150g)	18
Pepperoni pizza	whole pizza 11"	36
Stuffed crust pepperoni pizza	whole pizza 10"	61
Margherita pizza	whole pizza 11"	34
Frozen breaded chicken breast	1 breast	15
Breaded fish fillets	1 fillet	13
Fish fingers	2 fingers	7
Scotch eggs	1 large egg	12
<b>Canned soup</b>		
Lentil soup	1/2 can (200g)	5
Mediterranean tomato soup	1/2 can (200g)	2
Tomato & lentil soup	1/2 can (200g)	4
Oxtail soup	1/2 can (200g)	4
Cream of chicken soup	1/2 can (200g)	3
Cream of mushroom soup	1/2 can (200g)	3



<b>Savoury snacks</b>		
Mini scotch eggs	1 piece	2
Mini sausage roll	1 piece	2
Mini pork pie	1 piece	5
Falafel	1 piece	2
Chicken liver paté	40g	4
Smoked salmon paté	40g	3
Smoked mackerel paté	40g	5
<b>Dips and sauces</b>		
Tahini (sesame seed spread)	1 heaped tsp	4
Houmous	1 tbsp	3
Pesto	1 tbsp	1
Sour cream & chive	1 tbsp	1
Cheese/carbonara sauce	1/2 pot (175g)	10
Black bean stir fry sauce	1/2 pot (175g)	2
<b>Sandwich fillers</b>		
Coronation chicken	2 tbsp (50g)	5
Egg and bacon	2 tbsp (50g)	7
Chicken tikka	2 tbsp (50g)	8
Prawn mayonnaise	2 tbsp (50g)	4
<b>Snacks and spreads</b>		
Nutella®	1 tbsp (20g)	1
Nut butters (e.g. peanut, almond, cashew)	1 tbsp (20g)	5
Fish paste	1 tbsp (20g)	3
Bovril®	1 tsp	3
Marmite®	4g	2

<b>Desserts</b>		
Cheesecake	1 slice (90g)	5
Apple crumble	1 portion (125g)	3
Bakewell slices	2 slices	3
Rice pudding	1 pot (100g)	3
Crème caramel	1 pot (100g)	3
Fruit fools	1 pot (120g)	3
Trifle	1 pot (125g)	2
Mousse (e.g. chocolate, lemon, strawberry)	1 pot (100g)	3
Popcorn (sweet, salted)	25g	1
Custard tart	1 tart	6
Fruit yoghurts	1 pot (125g)	5
Yogurt Muller Corner®	1 pot (135g)	6
Soya yoghurt	1 serving (125g)	5
Greek yogurt (natural, full fat)	1 serving (125g)	5
Greek yogurt (natural, 0% fat or low fat)	1 serving (125g)	9
Fromage frais	1 pot (85g)	5
Custard	1 pot (120g)	4
Ice cream (e.g. vanilla)	1 scoop	2



## Contact details

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If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Dietetic Department at the address below:

The Royal Surrey County NHS Foundation Trust  
Department of Nutrition & Dietetics  
Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XX.

**Switchboard telephone:** 01483 571122 ext 4202

**Direct line:** 01483 464119

**Fax:** 01483 464868

**Email:** [rsch.dietitians@nhs.net](mailto:rsch.dietitians@nhs.net)

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–4.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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