



**Royal Surrey
County Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust

Eating when you have a small appetite

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Patient information leaflet

Who is this leaflet for?

The information in this leaflet is for you if you have:

- a poor appetite
- lost weight without meaning to
- lost interest in food
- been missing meals

Why is it important for me to eat well?

Poor appetite and/or weight loss are common during illness, after a period of time in hospital or during some medical treatments.

It is important to ensure that you eat well during these times to help with your recovery. Foods high in fat, protein and sugar provide lots of energy in small portions, making it easier for you to eat what you need.

The tips in this leaflet are intended to help you make the right choices and ensure that you eat as well as possible.

NOTE: If you have high cholesterol, diabetes or another medical condition which has required a change of diet in the past, and you are not sure if some of the suggestions in this leaflet are appropriate for you, please contact your dietitian to discuss alternative options or for advice.

How often should I eat?

If your appetite is poor you may find that your usual portion sizes are off-putting. You may be eating less than usual at mealtimes. If this is the case:

- Eat 'little and often'
- Try to include a small snack or nourishing drink between meals
- Have a dessert after meals
- Avoid low fat or diet foods
- Opt for a snack meal instead of a main meal if you find this easier
- Do not be afraid to use convenience foods. Supermarkets stock a wide range of frozen, chilled or packet ready meals. These will save you time and energy.

What if I cannot manage my main meal?

You may find it particularly difficult to eat a main meal if your appetite is poor, but it is important to try and eat something. Having a nourishing meal does not mean always eating 'meat and two veg', a hot or cold snack can be just as nutritious. This can be toast with a topping, soup or a sandwich. You may find eating a pudding easier than a main course e.g. apple crumble and custard or ice-cream.

How much should I eat?

It can be very difficult to eat your normal meals if you are not hungry. If you are not eating as much or your portion sizes are smaller than normal, it is important to 'top-up' with extra ingredients.

You should aim to include a minimum of an extra 500 calories per day. Some people find counting calories useful, and there are tables on pages 16–18 to help you. However if you prefer, you can simply refer to the ideas on pages 5–7 for snack ideas and enriching your food. If you need to increase your protein intake, please refer to our booklet *How to increase the protein in your diet*.

Toppings for toast

Choose different types of bread, or crumpets and muffins.

- Poached or scrambled egg with grated cheese
- Sardines or pilchards in tomato sauce
- Tinned salmon or tuna with mayonnaise
- Smoked salmon and cream cheese
- Smoked mackerel or kippers
- Baked beans with grated cheese
- Grated cheese mixed with plain yoghurt and pineapple chunks
- Grilled bacon, mushrooms and tomatoes
- Tinned ravioli, macaroni cheese or spaghetti with grated cheese
- Homemade pizza: spread a slice of bread with tomato purée or ketchup, then top with grated cheese, ham and peppers and grill until bubbling.

Sandwich ideas

You may find eating a sandwich easier than making a hot meal. Make double-decker, toasted or open sandwiches with plenty of fillings to make them more nutritious.

Breads	Fillings	Extras
White	Meat: Ham, bacon, cooked chicken or turkey, salami, chorizo, corned beef, frankfurter, paté, liver sausage. Fish: Tinned tuna, tinned, fresh or smoked salmon, pilchards, sardines, smoked mackerel. Cheese: Soft cheese (e.g. brie, camembert), cheddar, edam, goat's cheese, cottage or cream cheese. Sandwich fillers: Coronation chicken, tuna & sweetcorn, seafood cocktail, chicken tikka. Eggs	Mayonnaise
'Best of both'		Salad cream
Wholemeal		Pickle
Multi-grain		Piccalilli
Crusty rolls		Houmous
Cheese rolls		Avocado
Baps		Lettuce
Bagels		Rocket
Submarine rolls		Tomato
Hotdog rolls		Cucumber
Pitta bread	Peppers	
Flat breads	Watercress	
		Spring onion

Soup ideas

Soup can be very tasty but it is not enough of a meal on its own. If you choose soup, try and have a sandwich with it, or use these ideas to make it more substantial:

- Make up a packet of condensed tinned soup with full cream milk instead of water
- Sprinkle grated cheese on the soup and allow it to melt
- Stir in a tablespoon of cream or crème fraîche
- Cut cheese on toast into cubes and add it to soup
- Add grilled bacon to give a tangy taste
- Add cooked meat, baked beans or tinned lentils

How do I add extra nutrition to my food?

You may find it difficult to eat large amounts at meals. Try to enrich food and drinks by adding extra ingredients using the table below:

Add sugar, jam, honey to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Cereal or porridge■ Puddings■ Hot Drinks, milkshakes or smoothies
Add extra fats (e.g. butter, margarine, spread, oils, mayonnaise) to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Mashed potato or pasta dishes■ Toast or bread■ Sauces
Add cream, crème fraîche, full cream milk to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Sauces and soups■ Mashed potato or pasta dishes■ Puddings, pastry and cakes■ Cereal or porridge■ Milkshakes or smoothies
Add grated cheese to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Sauces and soups■ Mashed potato or pasta dishes■ Pizza■ Scrambled eggs or omelettes■ Beans or spaghetti on toast
Add skimmed milk powder to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Milk (see recipe on page 7)■ Porridge■ Mashed potato■ Creamy sauces and soups■ Custard and milky puddings■ Milkshakes
Add cream, evaporated or condensed milk, yoghurt, crème fraîche, custard or ice cream to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Puddings and deserts■ Fruit, fruit pies or crumbles■ Jelly, cakes and pastries

What about fruit and vegetables?

Fruit and vegetables are an important source of vitamins, minerals and fibre in the diet. They are also very low in energy and not useful on their own when you have a small appetite.

Do include them daily, as you are able, but do not fill up on them. Try to enrich them by adding extras. For example:

- Cauliflower with cheese sauce
- Salad with creamy dressing
- Stewed apple with custard
- Fruit salad or tinned fruit with cream or ice-cream
- Fruit smoothies with ice cream

What snacks should I eat?

Sweet snacks for any time of the day

- Milky puddings e.g. custard, rice pudding, sago
- Thick & creamy or Greek yoghurt, corner yoghurts, full fat yoghurts e.g. Activia® Intensely creamy, The Collective®, Onken®, Rachel's Organic®
- Small pots of fromage frais or children's yoghurts
- Chocolate desserts, trifles, or cheesecakes
- Fruit fools, mousses, instant whips or crème caramel
- Ice-cream, mini ice-creams, choc ices, frozen yoghurt
- Toast with plenty of butter or spread and jam, honey, marmalade, lemon curd or chocolate spread
- Breakfast cereal with full cream milk and sugar or glucose. Or you may find it easier to nibble on dry cereal
- Dried fruit e.g. raisins, cranberries, banana chips, papaya, mango
- Bite size snacks e.g. flapjacks, mini rolls, millionaire shortbread
- Sweet biscuits, especially chocolate or cream filled biscuits
- Mini cakes e.g. Bakewell tarts, jam and custard tarts, lemon and angel slices, chocolate or blueberry muffins
- Cereal or chocolate bars

- Cakes, pastries, chocolate éclairs or doughnuts
- Plain scones, malt loaf, brioche, scotch pancakes, tea cakes or hot cross buns with butter, spread and jam
- Wine gums, jelly babies

Savoury snacks for any time of the day

- Sandwiches with plenty of butter, spread, mayonnaise or salad cream
- Mini sausage rolls, scotch eggs, quiches, pork pies
- Mini Indian or Chinese party food e.g. samosas, onion bhajis, spring rolls
- Breadsticks or crisps or pitta bread with dips e.g. houmous, sour cream, taramasalata or tzatziki
- Crisps, pretzels or tortilla chips
- Individual cheese portions or cheese strings
- Cheese straws, mini cheddars, TUC® sandwich biscuits
- Avocado
- Toast or crackers with plenty of butter, spread and peanut butter, Marmite®, Bovril®, paté, fish paste or smoked salmon
- Muffins and crumpets with butter or spread and cheese
- Nuts and seeds

What should I drink?

It is desirable to include at least 8-10 cups/6-8 mugs of fluid per day to prevent dehydration. This may be rather a lot if you have a small appetite.

Spread them evenly through the day and try not to drink with meals, as you may find this fills you up.

Always make sure you have a drink next to you. It will remind you that you need to keep sipping throughout the day.

Have at least 1 pint of full cream, Channel Island, Jersey or gold top milk each day. Use in drinks, on cereal or to make milky puddings.

Fortify milk by adding 2-4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to each pint. Mix a little milk with the milk powder to make a paste and then stir as you add the rest of the pint.

Use evaporated milk to make custard, milk jellies and milk puddings.

Choose nourishing drinks, such as:

- Cold milk, milkshake or yoghurt drinks
- Hot milky drinks e.g. coffee, hot chocolate, cocoa, malted milk, Ovaltine®, Horlicks®, Milo®
- Full sugar fizzy drinks or squash/cordial added to water or lemonade
- Fruit juices or smoothies, with added full cream milk, greek yoghurt or ice cream
- Nesquik®, Crusha® syrup or Complian Shakes® (flavoured or unflavoured)
- Meritene® or 'gourmet' soups

Nourishing drink recipes

Here are a few recipes for nutritious drinks for you to try at home. Unless otherwise stated mix all ingredients in a jug or a blender, and enjoy!

Tips

- Try using different fruits to vary the taste and make up your own combinations
- Use fresh, frozen or tinned fruit
- Stew or microwave fruit such as apples
- Add extra honey, sugar or syrup to sweeten
- Add extra whole milk, natural yoghurt or cream cheese to make them less sweet
- Add extra milk or fruit juice to make them thinner.

Homemade milky drinks

Fortified milkshake

Ingredients

- 180ml full fat milk
- 30g skimmed milk powder
- 20g vitamin fortified milkshake powder (e.g. Nesquik® or Tesco milkshake mix)

Directions

1. Mix milk powder and milkshake powder together in a glass.
2. Gradually mix in milk and stir well.

1 portion contains:

- 300 calories (kcal)
- 18g protein

Choco banana surprise

Ingredients

- 200ml Oatly chocolate oat milk
- 50g banana
- 30g cooked chicken breast (this does not affect the flavour but provides lots of protein!)

Directions

1. Shred or chop the chicken in to a measuring jug
2. Gradually add 200ml of oat milk whilst blending
3. Add the banana and blend

1 portion contains:

- 215 calories
- 11.5g protein

Banana Oat Shake

Ingredients

- 1 banana (chopped)
- 200ml full fat milk
- 2 tablespoons full fat yoghurt
- Pinch cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon honey
- For extra protein add 1 tablespoon skimmed milk powder (2g)
- For extra calories add 1 tablespoon double cream (66kcal)

Directions

Place all the ingredients into a blender and blend for 30-60 seconds until smooth. Pour into a glass and serve.

1 portion contains:

- 250 calories
- 8.9g protein

Luxury Hot Chocolate

Ingredients

- 200ml full fat milk
- 2 tablespoons skimmed milk powder
- 2 tablespoons hot chocolate powder
- 1 tablespoons double cream

Directions

1. Pour 200ml milk into a pan and add the skimmed milk powder and hot chocolate.
2. Turn on the heat and stir or mix with a whisk until the powder has dissolved.
3. Keep stirring and heat until just boiling.
4. Remove from the heat and pour into a mug.
5. Add the cream and serve.

1 portion contains:

- 419 calories
- 13.4g protein

Very berry milkshake

Ingredients

- A few handfuls of raspberries, strawberries, blueberries and/or blackberries
- 200ml whole milk
- Few drops vanilla essence
- 1 tablespoon (15ml) double cream
- Sugar to taste (optional)

1 portion contains:

- 228 calories
- 7.4g protein

Iced latté

Ingredients

- 200ml full cream milk
- 2 teaspoons coffee powder
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 scoop ice cream

Directions

Dissolve the coffee in a little hot milk. Add the remaining milk, sugar and ice cream. Whisk and chill thoroughly.

1 portion contains:

- 220 calories
- 7.7g protein

Homemade juice style drinks

Fortified fruit juice

Ingredients (2 portions)

- 180ml fruit juice (flavour ideas below)
- 40ml undiluted high juice squash or cordial (not sugar free / diet / no added sugar)
- 10g (2 x 5g sachets) egg white powder*

Flavours

- High juice blackcurrant squash and cranberry juice
- High juice orange squash and pineapple juice
- Elderflower cordial and apple juice
- High juice cranberry squash and orange juice

Directions

1. Mix undiluted cordial or squash into egg white powder (do not whisk).
2. Gradually mix the 'neat' cordial into the egg white powder using a spoon.
3. When it is combined, slowly mix in the fruit juice.

1 portion contains

- 185-235 calories (depending on flavour)
- 8.3g protein

*There is no taste of egg to this supplement. The recipe is not suitable to be made using a fork, whisk, shaker or blender – if any of these are used, due to the egg white content, it will become extremely frothy and therefore not very palatable. If the egg white powder is added to the liquid, or the liquid is mixed in too quickly, the powder will form clumps and will not mix into the liquid smoothly.

Lemon and lime sublime

Ingredients

- 100ml lemonade
- 100ml lime juice
- 100ml apple juice
- 2½ tablespoons lemon curd
- 1 tablespoon golden syrup
- One teaspoon (5g) egg white powder (optional)

Directions

1. Mix all ingredients together in a blender.
2. If using egg white powder gradually mix the 'neat' cordial into the egg white powder using a spoon, then when it is combined, gradually mix in the fruit juice.

1 portion contains:

- 303 calories
- 1.5g protein
- (325 calories and 6g protein with egg white powder)

Mango Lassi

Ingredients

- 125g natural Greek yoghurt
- 200ml mango pulp (available in most supermarkets)
- Water to dilute
- Squeeze of lemon juice (optional for a sharper/tarter flavour)
- Sugar or honey to taste (optional for a sweeter flavour)

Directions

Mix all ingredients together in a blender.

1 portion contains:

- 300 calories
- 11.3g protein

Homemade 'shots'

These recipes are for 'shot'-style drinks which will give you lots of extra energy in a small volume. They are especially useful if you struggle to finish bigger drinks.

Fortified lemon cream

Ingredients (3 x 100g portions)

- 300ml double cream
- 70g caster sugar
- Juice of 1 – 1 1/2 lemons
- 30g skimmed milk powder

Directions

1. Put the cream and milk powder in a small saucepan.
2. Gently heat until the milk powder has dissolved.
3. Add the sugar.
4. Bring to the boil and boil for 3 minutes.
5. Thoroughly mix in the lemon juice to taste.
6. Pour into 3 small dessert bowls and chill, or drink as 2 x 50ml 'shots' each day.
7. Will keep (covered) in fridge for 3 days

1 portion (100ml) contains

- 590 calories
- 5g protein

Fortified chocolate caramel cream

Ingredients (3 x 80g portions)

- 150ml double cream
- 30g skimmed milk powder
- 30ml full fat milk
- 2 x standard size (51g) Mars or similar nougat-caramel chocolate bars

Directions

1. Put the cream and milk powder in a small saucepan.
2. Gently heat until the milk powder has dissolved.
3. Add finely chopped Mars Bars. Heat gently, stirring all the time, until the Mars Bars have completely melted.
4. Pour into 3 small dessert bowls and chill or drink as 2 x 40ml 'shots'
5. Will keep covered in fridge for 3 days.

1 portion (80ml) contains

- 424 calories
- 6g protein

Avocado and Honey Shot (4 x 60g portions)

Ingredients

- 1/2 avocado
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 200ml coconut milk
- 80g mango (frozen)

Directions

Mix all ingredients together in a blender.

2 x 60g portions contain:

- 232 calories
- 3.5g protein

Nutty Choc shot

Ingredients

- 50g Nutella®
- 100ml evaporated milk

3 x 50ml portions contain:

- 435 calories
- 10.6g protein

Cream shots

Ingredients

- 30mls double cream
- 10mls flavoured syrup of your choice e.g. Crusha® syrup, Monin® syrup

Directions

It is advisable to take 3 of these shots each day. You may want to make up the whole amount.

3 x 40ml portions contain:

- 518 calories
- 1.2g protein

Calorie and protein content of foods to enrich your food

Food item	Amount	Calories	Protein
Cheddar cheese	15g	62	3.8
Parmesan cheese	15g	60	4.9
Feta cheese	15g	42	2.5
Single cream	1 tablespoon (15ml)	29	0.5
Double cream	1 tablespoon (15ml)	70	0.2
Evaporated milk	1 tablespoon (15ml)	24	1.1
Crème fraiche	1 tablespoon (15ml)	45	0.4
Sour cream	1 tablespoon (15ml)	29	0.4
Full cream milk	50ml	32	1.6
Skimmed milk powder	1 tablespoon (15g)	53	5.4
Butter	15g	112	0.1
Margarine/spread (not low fat)	15g	61	0
Oil	1 tablespoon (15ml)	135	0
Mayonnaise	1 tablespoon (15ml)	109	0.2
Salad cream	1 tablespoon (15ml)	44	0.2
Full fat natural yoghurt	1 tablespoon (15ml)	12	0.8
Condensed milk	1 tablespoon (15ml)	49	1.0
Custard (made with whole milk)	3 tablespoons (45ml)	45	1.3
Vanilla ice-cream	1 scoop	49	1.3
Sugar	1 teaspoon (5g)	20	0
Honey	1 teaspoon (5g)	16	0
Jam	1 teaspoon (5g)	13	0

Calorie and protein content of snacks and puddings

Food item	Calories (Kcal)	Protein (g)
Sweet Treats		
Custard tart	240	5.0
Mini apple pie	215	2.4
Mini cherry bakwell	215	1.8
Mini chocolate muffin	115	1.6
Angel slice	95	0.7
Mini flapjack	70	0.9
Mini millionaire shortbread	60	0.6
Confectionary		
Chocolate digestive	85	1.2
Hobnob biscuit	73	1.1
Milk chocolate	80	1.1
Fun size Mars bar	80	0.6
Wine gums (5 sweets)	95	1.5
Jelly babies (3 sweets)	65	1.0
Desserts		
Individual apple crumble	300	3.6
Mini strawberry trifle	185	2.5
Corner yoghurt	158	5.7
Pot of custard	150	4.8
Pot of rice pudding	125	4.0
Chocolate mousse	120	2.4
1 scoop vanilla ice cream	75	1.2
Savoury Snacks		
Mini pork pie	275	6.0
Mini vegetable samosa	175	3.3
Mini sausage roll	110	2.2
Mini scotch egg	55	1.8
TUC® cheese sandwich biscuit	72	1.1
1 Babybel® cheese	61	4.4
Individual cheddar cheese portion (20g)	83	5.0
Packet ready salted crisps (23g)	134	1.5
Cheese twist	125	3.3

Calorie and protein content of drinks

Drink item	Calories (Kcal) per 100ml	Protein (g) per 100ml
Milkshakes		
Frijj® milkshake	80	3.8
Yazoo® milkshake	70	3.2
Yop® drinking yoghurt	76	2.8
Mars®/Galaxy®/Malteser® milkshakes	80	3.5
Shaken Udder®	106	3.5
Milk		
Whole cow's milk	66	3.3
Gold top / Channel Island milk	78	3.6
Semi skimmed cow's milk	46	3.4
1% cow's milk	43	3.6
Skimmed cow's milk	37	3.6
Lacto-free whole cow's milk	57	3.4
Lacto-free semi skimmed cow's milk	40	3.6
Goat's milk	62	3.1
Milk alternatives		
Soya milk (unsweetened)	31	3.3
Soya milk (sweetened)	44	3.3
Rice milk	47	0.1
Oat milk	45	1.0
Almond milk	24	0.5
Coconut milk	27	0.2

Reference sources

- **British Dietetic Association**
www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/MalnutritionFactSheet
- **NHS Choices**
www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Malnutrition/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Contact details

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

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This leaflet is produced by the dietetic department at The Royal Surrey County Hospital, NHS Foundation Trust. It is not a substitute for dietary advice given to a specific individual by a dietitian. If you need to see a dietitian, ask your GP or consultant for a referral.

Please note that the information in this leaflet was correct at time of writing.
The ingredients of manufactured products can change.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

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

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, 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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