

Food First Advice

Making your food work for you

Food First

Food is very important to help you maintain your health. It contains essential vitamins and minerals as well as protein to help the body repair itself and recover from illness.

Eating well also helps to maintain weight and to fight infections. However when you feel unwell you may not feel like eating – just when you need food the most!

If you have Diabetes or high Cholesterol - speak with your Doctor before starting.

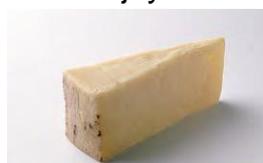
If you are taking thickened fluids, liquids will need to be thickened to the correct consistency. Check with your Doctor for further information.

Poor Appetite?

- Eat little and often – try eating small frequent meals every 2-3 hours
- Don't skip meals – if you can't manage a meal, try a milky drink instead e.g. milkshake, hot chocolate and a small snack
- Feeling hungry? Make the most of it and eat more when you are feeling hungry e.g. if you are hungry most in the morning, try having a cooked breakfast, or snack if you find you are hungry between meals
- Eat first, drink later. Drinking with meals can make you feel fuller sooner
- Can't be bothered cooking? Choose ready-made oven/microwave meals or tinned foods
- A small glass of alcohol may stimulate your appetite – try having one 30 minutes before your meal (ask your doctor first to ensure it is suitable with any medications you take)
- Get out – fresh air can often help stimulate your appetite. Try going for a brief stroll or simply step outside for a while. Try to eat in a well ventilated room
- If possible try and make meal times a social time

Making the most of your food

- Aim to have at least one pint of whole milk (blue top) a day – either by itself or in drinks and puddings. To get extra nourishment mix 4 heaped tablespoons of dried milk powder per pint of milk – this is called enriched milk
- Add cheese, cream or butter/margarine to vegetables, sauces, soups, and mashed potatoes
- Add extra sauces and gravies to meat, chicken and fish – e.g. white sauce, parsley sauce
- Use mayonnaise, salad cream, cheese, egg or avocado in your meals and snacks
- Making puddings, use enriched milk and add extra cream, honey or condensed milk
- Try to have a small glass of fruit juice a day – add extra sugar and dilute with water or lemonade to make a longer drink
- Avoid diet and low calorie products at this time – you can return to these once you are back to normal eating patterns. Try and choose full fat products –e.g. full fat milk and yoghurt
- Choose your favourite foods often – eating is to be enjoyed!



Why do I need to snack between my meals?

- Snacking between meals is very helpful if you have a small appetite as it helps to increase your overall intake of food and nutrients.
- In addition to your normal diet, try to have 2-3 snacks between meals.
- Try and eat small amounts regularly – eg breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and supper.

Regular Options

- Cheese and crackers.
- Dried fruit and nuts.
- Muesli bar or Flapjack.
- Small packet of crisps.
- Sandwich with meat/cheese.
- Piece of fruit.
- Chocolate biscuits.
- Crackers and dip.
- Crumpets with spread.
- Cheese on toast.

Soft Options

- Scrambled eggs.
- Tinned fruit and ice cream.
- White crustless sandwich with creamy filling e.g. egg or tuna mayo / cream cheese / jam / smooth peanut butter.
- Pastry/pie softened with custard/cream.
- Porridge/soggy cereal with milk/double cream
- Baked beans on toast.
- Soft, moist cake/muffin.
- Scone with clotted cream and jam.

Very Soft and Puree Options

- Yoghurt.
- Custard.
- Chocolate or fruit mousse.
- Milky pudding.
- Mashed banana and custard.
- Creamed Rice.
- Jelly and ice cream.
- Fromage frais.
- Crème caramel.
- Self saucing pudding.

Liquid Options

- Soup with milk/double cream.
- Glass of full fat milk (blue top).
- Glass of enriched milk (make by adding 4 tablespoons milk powder to full fat milk).
- Glass of fruit juice.
- Fruit smoothie (e.g. Innocent, supermarket brand).
- Milkshake.
- Soft drinks or cordial.
- Nourishing drinks (see 'Nourishing Drinks' Leaflet).

Stocking the Cupboard and Fridge

Choose products that are full fat and/or sugar. Avoid diet or low calorie varieties unless otherwise told by your health care team.

- Whole milk/full cream milk (blue top)
- Desserts, mousses, yoghurts, fromage frais, ice-cream and puddings
- Oils, margarines, butter and spreads
- Cheeses, both hard and spreadable
- Mayonnaise, salad dressings, coleslaw, dips etc.
- Cakes, crisps, biscuits – cream, chocolate, cheese
- Nuts* and seeds (choose unsalted)
- Drinks^ - Lemonade, cola, cordials (choose diet varieties if you have diabetes)
- Jams, marmalade, lemon curd etc.
- Soups^ – choose 'cream of' varieties

^ if you are taking thickened fluids, liquids will need to be thickened to the correct consistency. Check with your Doctor for further information

Getting more out of your fluids

Nourishing drinks provide you with extra energy and calories as well as fluid to keep you hydrated.

Why do I need nourishing drinks?

- You may have lost weight due to illness.
- You may need extra nourishment.
- You may have a poor appetite and find fluids easier to take.

Many people fill up on drinks such as tea, coffee, Oxo, Bovril, fizzy drinks, packet soups and water when they are feeling unwell. These drinks offer little nutritional value and simply fill you up without providing any nutrition. The following suggestions provide you with an increase in energy and protein along with other essential nutrients.

Banana Smoothie

- 200mls full cream milk (blue top)
- 1 small ripe banana
- 1 scoop ice-cream
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Mash banana, add all ingredients, blend and serve chilled. Further ice cream can be added or try a teaspoon of honey for a sweeter taste.

Malt Honey Milkshake

- 200mls full cream milk (blue top)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 scoop-ice cream
- 1 teaspoon (5g) malted milk powder (e.g. Horlicks) or 1 tablespoon Milo

Blend for 15 seconds.

Yoghurt and Berry Smoothie

- Small pot of greek yoghurt
- Handful of frozen berries
- 1 small banana
- 150mls full cream milk (blue top)

Blend until smooth.



Super shake

- 200mls full cream milk (blue top)
- 3 tablespoons (45ml) double cream
- 1 scoop ice-cream
- 4 teaspoons milk powder
- 2 teaspoons milk shake flavouring
- (e.g. Nesquick/Crusha)

Blend for 15 seconds, adding more flavouring if you like.

Fruit Blast

- 100mls fresh fruit juice
- 100mls lemonade
- 1 scoop ice-cream
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Mix together and serve chilled.

Ready Made Drinks

These can be purchased from small stores and the supermarket

- Mars, Mars Extra, Mars Active, Yazoo, Galaxy, Aero, Bounty, flavoured milk
- Smoothies and milkshakes



Please note if you are taking thickened fluids the above drinks will need to be thickened to the correct consistency. Check with your Doctor for further information

Nourishing Drinks

Over The Counter Supplement Drinks

Over The Counter Supplement drinks are high energy and protein drinks that are available from most supermarkets and some chemists, and are available over the counter without a prescription.

There are two varieties including those that are “ready to drink” straight from the tin / bottle or those that are powdered and need to be mixed with milk before consuming.

Ready to Drink

e.g. Nurishment™, Nutrament™

Serve these drinks chilled or over ice. You can incorporate them into your meals e.g. pour over ice cream or add the neutral flavour to soups.

Powdered

e.g. Mertiene Energis™, Complan™

Make these according to the directions on the pack using full fat milk (blue top). For extra calories add 2 tablespoons of double cream and ice cream.

For a savoury option, Mertiene Energis soups are also available. For extra calories add 2 tablespoons of double cream, a dollop of margarine/butter or some extra vegetable oil.

Supplement name	Size and presentation	Energy (calories)	Protein	Company
AYMES™ Retail	38g powder sachet made with 200ml full fat milk	265 kcal	15.1g	AYMES
Mertiene™	30g powder sachet made with 200 ml semi-skimmed milk	200 kcal	16.0 g	Nestle
Mertiene™ Soup	50g powder sachet made with 150 ml warm water	207 kcal	7.0g	Nestle
Complan™	57g powder sachet made with 200 ml full fat milk	385 kcal	15.0 g	Complan Foods
Nutrament™	356 ml tin – ready to drink liquid	360 kcal	16.0 g	Novartis
Nurishment™	420 ml tin – ready to drink liquid	428 kcal	21.0 g	Dunns River

These drinks are not designed to be used in place of meals; they are intended to provide a ‘top-up’ of energy and protein while your appetite and/or oral intake is poor. They should be taken in between meals or as a bed time drink so as not to spoil your appetite.

Care tips for chewing & swallowing difficulties

Chewing and swallowing problems (also called dysphagia) can be dangerous to your health. The muscles of the mouth and throat may no longer be working properly, so bits of food and liquid can move into the lungs (aspiration). This may occur for many reasons including medical conditions, age, distractions, eating patterns and dentition. Whatever the reason it can cause infections and illness and should be assessed by your health care team.

If you are experiencing dysphagia discuss with your Doctor. . However there are also things you can do immediately:

Ask yourself:

If you find you are coughing or choking regularly when eating and you are getting worried, ask the following questions as they may identify the problem:

- What type of food or fluid were you eating when the choking occurred?
- If you wear dentures, were they in at the time?
- Were you walking around with food in your mouth?
- Were you laughing or talking while eating?

You may find the following tips make eating and drinking easier:

- Ensure that foods are neither too hot nor too cold.
- Eat attractive, tasty, pleasant-smelling foods to enhance your appetite.
- Try finger foods – these are easy to manage without utensils.
- Make sure you are ready to eat i.e. your dentures, eyeglasses and hearing aids are in place.
- When you are distracted, you are more prone to coughing and choking, so try to make the eating environment quiet and inviting with as few distractions as possible. Try playing some quiet music.
- Make sure you are seated correctly (upright and at a table if possible).
- Avoid over filling your mouth – using a teaspoon rather than a fork will help.
- Remember to chew each mouthful thoroughly.
- Clean out your mouth after each meal using a toothbrush or mouth sponge to clean teeth/ dentures, gums and tongue, then rinse with water or mouthwash.
- Take as much time as necessary to eat and enjoy the meal – don't feel pressured.
- Remain sitting in an upright position for at least 30 minutes after each meal.



If you have problems swallowing discuss with your Doctor. If you use thickened fluids do so under direction of your Doctor.

Soft Diet

Tips for preparing a soft diet

Many people require changes to their diet to ensure the food and fluid consumed is managed easily. In addition, if you have a small appetite, you may find small frequent meals easier to manage than large meals. You should choose foods which are high in calories if you have recently lost weight unintentionally or need to gain weight.

Preparation Tips: To ensure a soft consistency, foods should be well cooked.

Meat or Poultry

- Choose tender meat and casseroles to ensure they are soft. Use soft tinned meats or ready-cooked meats in small pieces with sauce or gravy.

Fish

- Steam, bake or microwave boneless fish (without batter) and serve with a sauce or enriched milk. Alternatively use tinned (boneless fish) such as tuna or salmon.

Eggs

- Eggs can be scrambled, poached, boiled or made in to an omelette.
- Extra butter, margarine or milk may be needed to make them softer.
- Boiled eggs may be grated or mashed with butter or mayonnaise.

Cheese

- Add grated cheese to mashed potatoes, sauces, soups and vegetables (ensure it does not go stringy).

Bread

- Use soft white bread and remove the crusts to make soft sandwiches. Choose soft fillings such as tinned fish, egg mayonnaise, hummus or spreads.

Pasta

- Choose dishes such as macaroni cheese, spaghetti bolognese or lasagne.

Legumes or pulses

- Choose baked beans or dahl/pulse dishes.

Vegetables

- Fresh, frozen or tinned vegetables can be cooked until soft; add margarine/butter or serve with a tomato or white sauce. Alternatively mash vegetables (such as potatoes) with margarine/butter and add grated cheese.

Fruit

- Choose soft fresh (remove skin, seeds, pips) or tinned fruit. Any fruit can be stewed (with added sugar) or mashed. Serve with custard, yoghurt, double cream, ice cream, fromage frais, condensed or evaporated milk.

Puddings and Desserts

- Home made, tinned and packet puddings are all suitable; custard, rice pudding, sago, tapioca, sponge or stewed fruit with custard, ice cream, double cream or evaporated/condensed milk. Other options are thick and creamy yoghurts, fromage frais, crème caramel, chocolate and fruit mousses.

Breakfast Cereal

- Try porridge made with full fat milk (choose a fine oatmeal for a smoother texture). Weetabix, Cornflakes, Rice Crispies etc. need to be left to soak in milk or served with hot milk to make it soft. Avoid 'mixed consistency' cereal such as muesli that may have hard bits such as nuts in it.

If you have problems swallowing discuss with your Doctor. If you use thickened fluids do so under direction of your Doctor.

Tips for preparing a puree diet

Many people require changes to their diet to ensure the food and fluid taken is managed easily. In addition, if you have a small appetite, you may find small frequent meals easier to manage than large meals. You should choose foods which are high in calories if you have recently lost weight unintentionally or need to gain weight.

Preparation Tips:

To puree a food means to blend or whisk it into a thick, smooth paste with no lumps.

- To ensure a puree consistency, solid foods should be well cooked, chopped into small pieces and blended using a food processor.
- You may find it easier to blend small quantities at a time as the blender then works more efficiently. It may take a couple of minutes for the food to blend properly.
- Ensure the blades of the blender are covered by the food before switching it on.
- Adding water when blending food will achieve the correct consistency but will not increase the nutritional content. Instead add extra stock, gravy, sauce, sour cream, fruit juice, milk, double cream, or Over the Counter Supplement Drinks e.g. Mertiene Energis™, Complian™, Nutrument™, Supligen™, Nurishment™ to help achieve the correct consistency and add extra calories. If adding hot liquids, let it cool slightly before adding.
- Ensure the lid is on properly before switching on to prevent any spills and splashes.
- Rinse blender immediately after use and clean it with warm soapy water. Be careful not to immerse electrical parts in water.

Food Type	Puree Consistency Foods	Foodstuffs to Add When Blending
Milk, Cheese & Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk and milkshakes • Double cream or sour cream • Yoghurt without nuts, pieces of fruit or seeds • Cottage cheese • Macaroni and cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk and yoghurt are good sources of protein and can be used to thin casseroles
Meat, Fish, Poultry & Meat Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pureed meat, fish (no bones), or poultry • Scrambled eggs or egg substitute • Pureed casseroles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try thinning pureed meats or casseroles with broth, stock, gravy or cheese/tomato-based sauces • You can also try adding Mertiene Energis™ soup
Breads, Rice, Cereals, Pasta and Potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked cereal without added fruits/nuts • Pureed rice, noodles • Mashed potatoes/root vegetables e.g. Sweet potato, butternut squash, pumpkin, turnip, swede • Broth, strained cream, soup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a small amount of gravy or sauce when pureeing noodles or rice • Try adding milk to root vegetables/potato to help with blending and add extra butter/margarine and cheese to boost calories
Fruits and Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pureed vegetables • Vegetable and fruit juices • Apple sauce • Pureed fruit • Mashed avocado 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add butter, margarine or mayonnaise to puree vegetables to boost calories • Mix pureed fruit with yoghurt, ice cream, custard or cream. • Try blending fruit to make shakes with milk or juice or Over the Counter Supplement Drinks e.g. Meritene Energis™, Complian™, Nurishment™
Sweets & Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pudding, custard, gelatine, ice cream, ice lollies or fruit ice • Pureed cakes and pies • Jelly • Whipped topping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honey, jelly, or syrup can be blended into other foods for extra flavour and calories • Add sugar, honey, and syrup to desserts

If you have problems swallowing discuss with your Doctor. If you use thickened fluids do so under direction of your Doctor. If you have diabetes or high cholesterol discuss with your Doctor.

Tips to help you manage your food when you're feeling ill

Feeling sick (nausea) often occurs as a result of illness, during pregnancy or as a side effect to your medication. It is important that you continue to try to eat even small amounts to keep your nutrition up.

Tips for managing your food when you are feeling ill:

- Keep meals small and frequent throughout the day.
- Initially try half of your normal portion or meal size.
- Try eating dry foods, such as toast or crackers, first thing in the morning before you get up.
- Sip a fizzy drink - lemonade, ginger ale or mineral water
- Avoid rich sauces, fatty or fried foods if these cause you to feel nauseous
- Try to eat at a table. Remain in an upright position for at least 30 minutes after the meal.
- Take drinks in between meals, rather than with meals to avoid filling up on fluids
- A gentle short walk and some fresh air may help
- Try to eat in a well ventilated room
- Try sharp or citrus flavours or ginger flavoured foods and drinks

If the smell of food makes you feel sick try:

- Eating cold foods – cold meats and salad, sandwiches, cereals, fruit
- Avoid strong smelling foods e.g. fish, curries
- Use convenience foods which are cooked in the oven or microwave
- Ensure pot lids are on when cooking
- Try to casserole or bake in the oven as this reduces the smell
- Soups may be tolerated better from a beaker or lidded cup
- Let someone else do the preparation and cooking

If you are physically sick:

- Take frequent sips of fluids
- Try to have drinks which contain calories rather than plain water e.g. juices, milkshakes, hot chocolates, smoothies etc
- If your sickness persists consult with your GP.

Returning to a normal diet:

- When your sickness settles try and have some nourishing drinks such as milk-shakes, smoothies, or an over the counter supplement drink. Refer to the Nourishing Drinks handout for further information.
- Continue with small frequent meals and snacks and gradually progress back to your normal meals.



If you have problems swallowing discuss with your Doctor. If you use thickened fluids do so under direction of your Doctor. If you have diabetes or high cholesterol discuss with your Doctor.

Eating on a budget

Tips for shopping on a budget

Healthy eating on a budget is possible – it just takes some planning. This can save both time and money. If you have been advised to choose high calorie foods to assist with weight gain, be sure to avoid the low fat options available.

Shopping Tips:

- Make a shopping list and stick to it – this way you only buy what you need.
- Keep a list of standard food items and staples (e.g. rice, pasta, tinned foods) and buy extra when they are on sale.
- Store brands and generic products are often cheaper than brand name products.
- Buy quantities you can readily use/store easily to avoid wastage.
- Buy fruit and vegetables ‘in season’ as they are cheaper.
- Canned foods are often cheaper than fresh or frozen and store for longer without the need for refrigeration.
- Look out for ‘special offers’ sections – generally at the end of aisles, however be careful as these are not always bargains.
- Shop earlier or later in the day when items may be reduced for quick sale.
- Compare prices by unit (e.g. per kg) to get the best bargain (often listed on price tags on shelves).
- Use a ‘loyalty store card’ at bigger supermarkets e.g. Sainsbury’s nectar card or Tesco club card – they are free and points collected provide future discounts on products.
- Use dried beans to bulk meals and increase the protein content.
- Finish the whole container (e.g. ketchup) before buying a new one.
- Supermarkets often put brand name products in the middle of the shelves – look above and below for cheaper alternatives.
- Know your area – convenience stores often have special offers also, however generally they are more expensive.
- Prepare your own meals – this is cheaper than eating out.
- Buy powdered milk and use in drinking and cooking – to increase the protein and calories of your meals.

Store cupboard suggestions:

- Rice and Pasta
- Dried peas/beans/lentils
- Peanut Butter/Jam and Jelly
- Mayonnaise/ketchup/ Cooking oils
- Frozen/canned vegetables
- Canned Fish (e.g. tuna, sardines, mackerel)
- Canned baked beans / spaghetti / macaroni / sausages
- Sugar – white or brown
- Nuts and seeds
- Powdered milk
- Canned/dried fruit
- Milky desserts (custard, rice pudding)
- Porridge Oats and breakfast cereals

