

Is a high-calorie liquid drink recommended for weight gain?

Increasing portion size and adding snacks is often adequate for weight gain. However, when lack of interest in food and eating is a factor, a high-calorie liquid drink taken with meals or between meals is often recommended, though it should not replace a meal. These formulas are helpful because they are easy to prepare and consume. High-calorie liquid drinks are concentrated and, depending on the formula, supply varying amounts of protein, carbohydrate, and fat. Examples found in your supermarket or pharmacy include Carnation Instant Breakfast Drink, Ensure, and Boost, Resource,. Check with your physician or dietitian to choose the product that is right for you.

My child is growing slowly. What are some ways to encourage him/her to eat more?

The best estimates suggest that approximately 25% of young children have some trouble with eating. Parents and caretakers express much concern over a child who is a slow grower and will often pressure the child to eat larger quantities that can make the problem worse. Children should be encouraged - but never forced - to eat. Small portions (with second helpings when requested) are more acceptable to a child than large portions. Serve children three meals and two to three nutritious snacks between meals daily. Provide a positive eating experience. Let the child decide how much he/she will eat. Try some of the previously-mentioned meal and snack suggestions to add extra calories to your child's diet.

I've heard that eating three smaller meals and adding snacks in between is a good way to add more calories to my diet. What snacks should I eat to help me gain weight?

Snacking between meals is a good way to gain weight. To avoid getting too full, try eating snacks about two hours before your next meal and before bed. Any food that you like to eat can serve as a snack. The following snacks are high-calorie and nutritious:

- Nuts
- Juice, nectar, or milk shake*
- Popcorn with melted butter*
- Bagel with cream cheese
- Cheese* and crackers
- Half a sandwich
- Granola
- Gelatin with fruit
- Dried fruit
- Sliced fresh fruit blended with whole* milk
- Pudding* cups
- Muffins with butter* or margarine*
- Graham crackers with peanut butter
- Fruit and cheese*
- Cheese* toast
- Sherbet or ice cream*
- Cereal with whole* milk
- Granola bars
- Apples, bananas, or celery with peanut butter
- Candy bars such as Snickers, Salted Nut Roll, Mounds*, or Almond Joy*

* Higher saturated fat foods are OK if blood cholesterol and other lipids are normal

Many snack and food items recommended to help with weight gain seem to be high in fat. Should I be concerned about too much fat in my diet?

It depends. For some people, gaining weight is essential for the improvement of their health. Therefore, gaining weight is the primary goal. Because people who need to gain weight often have small appetites, it's important to give them as many calories as possible in a small amount of food. Because fat is high in calories, many foods suggested for weight gain are high in fat.

While eating high fat foods may not be healthy for everyone, eating high fat foods may be essential for an underweight individual who needs to gain weight. Talk with your physician or dietitian about what is most important for your health.

Brand names are used for information only and do not constitute an endorsement by Cooperative Extension.

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**AN APPLE
A DAY**

**WHEN
YOU NEED
TO GAIN
WEIGHT...**

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University of Nevada
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WHEN YOU NEED TO GAIN WEIGHT

A person is considered to be under a healthy weight if they are 15 to 20% or more below accepted weight standards. Underweight may be caused by: 1) food intake too low to meet energy and activity needs; 2) excessive activity, such as overzealous athletes in training; 3) poor absorption and utilization of the food consumed; 4) wasting disease, such as cancer, that increases the metabolic rate and energy needs; and 5) psychological or emotional stress. If you need to gain weight, talk to your physician, dietitian, or other health professional about what approach would be best for you.

My doctor has recommended that I try to gain some weight, but I don't have much of an appetite. What are some ways I can improve my appetite?

Eating more food than you are hungry for can be difficult. Here are some tips that may help increase your appetite:

- **Eat your meals at about the same time each day.** This helps to establish the habit of eating a balanced diet of three regular or six small meals daily. If you find that you are hungrier at one time of the day than another, such as in the morning, try increasing your portion sizes during this meal.
- **Eat meals with others, family, or friends.** Eating with others can make mealtime more enjoyable and food more appealing.
- **Eat your meals in a setting that is relaxing to you.** Your appetite can be negatively

affected by a stressful environment. Pleasant surroundings, eating with friends, and playing your favorite music can help you enjoy your meals more.

- **Get more exercise.** If you are sedentary, small increases in the amount of exercise you get, particularly in the morning, may help increase your appetite. Be sure to consult your physician before starting any exercise program.
- **Enjoy a beer or a glass of wine.** Alcohol can increase your appetite. Check with your physician before trying this.
- **If you smoke, try to quit.** Quitting can promote weight gain.
- **Keep nutritious snacks handy and where you can see them.** Eating small amounts between meals can add extra calories.
- **Make food more appealing.** Season foods with herbs and spices or add mustard, barbecue sauce, salsa, ketchup, vinegar, hot sauce, or a squeeze of lemon to make them more tasty.
- **If the smell of foods makes you nauseous,** try cold foods or foods at room temperature such as fruit, cheese and crackers, and sandwiches.

What are some simple ways I can add more calories to my meals without feeling like I'm overeating?

Eating at least three balanced meals a day is important. Some people find it more palatable to eat several small meals. Each meal or mini-meal should include items from at least three of the five food groups, which includes bread and grains, fruits, vegetables, meat and meat substitutes, and dairy. Adding extra calories to each meal or through the addition of snacks is necessary for weight gain.

Foods that can help you add calories to your balanced meals.

DINNER LUNCH BREAKFAST

• Drink apricot, peach, or strawberry fruit nectar
• Drink fruit juices, such as orange, pineapple, prune, or exotic blends
• Have whole* or 2%* milk
• Eat some dried fruit or sprinkle it onto cereal
• Have a banana or slice it onto cereal or on top of toast
• Stir a package of Carnation Instant Breakfast into whole* milk
• Sip some hot chocolate made with whole* milk
• Spread jam, peanut butter, honey, margarine*, or butter* on toast
• Pour maple or fruit syrup on pancakes, waffles, or French toast
• Add cream* and sugar to coffee or tea

• Have some fruited yogurt* (look for those containing sugar)
• Drink a glass of vegetable juice
• Layer some avocado and cheese* slices on a sandwich
• Whip up a milk shake*
• Have a regular soda pop instead of a diet one. Carbonated beverages can cause a "full" feeling so it's better to drink them AFTER your meal.
• Eat a bowl of cottage cheese with fruit
• Munch on a granola bar
• Crunch on some fresh vegetables with dip
• Have a bowl of canned fruit in syrup
• Finish off your lunch with a favorite cookie*

• Top vegetables with sour cream*, margarine*, or butter*
• Add avocado, olives, hard-boiled eggs*, or sunflower seeds to a green salad
• Pour sauces* and gravies* on meats and vegetables
• Eat cream* soups, such as chicken or potato
• Grate or slice cheese* on casseroles, soup, chili*, hot dogs*, or garlic bread*
• Pour creamy* salad dressings on salads
• Mix powdered milk into whole* milk
• Enjoy ice cream*, puddings*, custards*, cheesecake*, or pastries* for dessert
• Dollop whipped cream* on fruit

* Higher saturated fat foods are OK if blood cholesterol and other lipids are normal.