



# Helping children (over 1 year) make the most of what they eat

This leaflet gives dietary advice to the parents and carers of children who need extra help to meet their nutritional needs.

## Introduction

There are many reasons why children may not grow or gain weight as expected. They may not be able to eat enough food because of feeding difficulties or a poor appetite; or they may have higher energy needs because of a medical condition. At these times, children can benefit from having more energy dense (high calorie) foods and drinks to provide the extra nourishment they need.

## Five tips that can help

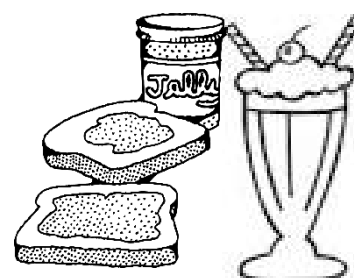
1. **Offering a variety of foods from each food group will help to give your child all the nutrients they need:**

- **Protein foods:** meat, fish, chicken, eggs, beans, pulses and vegetarian protein foods. Aim for two protein servings a day.
- **Milk and dairy foods:** full cream milk and yoghurts and full fat cheeses, including cream cheese. Aim for three dairy servings a day.
- **Starchy foods:** breads, cereals, rice, potatoes, pasta, noodles. Provide a serving with all meals.
- **Fruit and vegetables:** provide essential nutrients but are often low in energy (calories), so combine them with higher calorie foods at meal and snack times
- **Foods that are high in fat and sugar:** are very energy dense so offer more of these foods to help your child gain weight.

2. **If your child has a small appetite, then offer them regular opportunities to eat with three small meals and three nutritious snacks each day.**

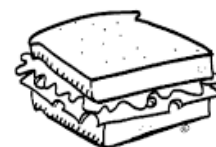
**Sweet snack ideas:** *(these can also be given as dessert at mealtimes):*

- Toasted bread fingers with butter and jam or honey, peanut butter or chocolate spread (not if allergic to nuts).
- Small sandwiches or crackers spread with any of the above.
- Mini muffin or small cake, flapjack, brownie or pastry
- Crumpet, scone, brioche or malt loaf spread with butter.
- Milk puddings such as custard, rice pudding or crème caramel.
- Full fat yoghurts, fromage frais or ice cream.
- Instant whip desserts made up with full cream milk.
- Fruit pieces with cream, ice cream or custard.
- Dried fruit with nuts (if not allergic to nuts, please note whole nuts may cause choking in children under 5 years).



### Savoury snack ideas:

- Hummus or mashed avocado dip with fingers of bread, toast, pitta bread or breadsticks.
- Small sandwiches spread with butter and filled with full fat cheese, cheese spread or cream cheese, egg, tuna or salmon mayonnaise, cold meats, or pâté, peanut butter (if not allergic to nuts).
- Crackers or rice cakes spread with any of the above.
- Crackers, cheese biscuits or cheesy bread sticks with slices or cubes of cheese, cheese spread or triangles.



### 3. Offer two courses at each mealtime: if your child doesn't eat all of the main course then the dessert is an opportunity to provide a calorie top up:

- Offer a savoury course first followed by a sweet course.
- Children with reduced appetites can be put off by big portions, so try serving a smaller amount and serve meals on a small plate. A second helping can always be given if requested.
- Cold foods can sometimes be more appetising if your child is put off by the smell of cooked foods. Try offering a sandwich or a chilled dessert.
- If there are times of the day when your child's appetite is better, take advantage of this. For example, when they are less tired.
- Try to keep mealtimes a relaxed and sociable occasion.
- Try not to make a fuss if your child refuses foods and never force your child to eat as this will often make things worse.

### 4. Fortify your child's food with high calorie addition,

Fortifying your child's food means enriching it with high calorie additions that make it more nourishing even if they only eat a small amount. Try adding one or more of the following items to each dish, choosing the option that suits your child best.

| Dishes to fortify:                                    | Items to add:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Full fat milk</b>                                  | Add 4 tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder to 1 pint of full cream milk.<br>Use this fortified milk to make up milky drinks such as milkshakes and smoothies, add to breakfast cereal, porridge, soups, sauces and instant whip desserts. |
| <b>Breakfast cereals and porridge</b>                 | Fortified full cream or Channel Island milk, evaporated milk, double cream, crème fraiche, smooth full fat or Greek yoghurt, stewed, tinned, dried or fresh fruit, sugar, honey, jam or syrup.                                                |
| <b>Mashed potato, pasta dishes and savoury sauces</b> | Fortified full cream or Channel Island milk, evaporated milk, double cream, grated cheese, butter, ghee, margarine, olive oil, full fat or Greek style yoghurt, hard-boiled egg, mayonnaise, salad cream, crème fraiche.                      |
| <b>Dishes to fortify:</b>                             | <b>Items to add:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Vegetables</b> | Grated cheese, butter, margarine, olive oil, evaporated milk, double cream, mayonnaise, salad cream, peanut butter (if not allergic), savoury sauces, for example cheese or white sauce, full fat or Greek style yoghurt.                       |
| <b>Soups</b>      | Fortified full cream or Channel Island milk, milk powder, grated cheese, full fat or Greek style yoghurt, crème fraiche, evaporated milk, double cream, fresh breadcrumbs, pasta, cooked meat or chicken, cooked or tinned beans or lentils.    |
| <b>Puddings</b>   | Full fat or Greek style yoghurt, crème fraiche, fromage frais, fortified full cream or Channel Island milk, evaporated milk, cream, ice cream, honey, jam, chocolate sauce or spread, custard, stewed or tinned fruit, fruit smoothie as sauce. |

**5. Try to offer drinks after meals and snacks rather than just before or during meals:**

- Young children can often find it difficult to tell the difference between thirst and hunger.
- It is easier for children to drink rather than eat, which can result in them drinking too much. Filling up on fluids often leads to a smaller appetite for food at mealtimes.

**Further helpful tips:**

- Cut food into bite size pieces and let young children feed themselves.
- Try to eat with your child and enable them to see you eating and enjoying a variety of foods.
- There is no need to rush your child when eating but after 30 minutes they will probably have lost interest and it can be best to end the mealtime. If they have not eaten much then offer them a top up snack after 1 to 2 hours.
- Distractions such as television or video games can be unhelpful during mealtimes as you want your child to be focused on enjoying their food.
- It is recommended that all children aged 1 to 5 years are given a daily vitamin supplement that contains vitamins A,C and D. Your dietitian will be able to give you advice on whether your child requires any additional supplements.

**Useful contacts:**

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Produced by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Dietitians

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