

Food First: Eating well to Prevent Malnutrition/Unplanned Weight Loss Patient / Carer Advice

To help prevent further weight loss and where appropriate promote weight gain, the **Food First** approach is recommended which involves small modifications to your current diet. This involves three main elements:

1

• **Aim to have one pint of full fat milk each day** – see below **and**

2

• **Include two high calorie snacks a day** from the list below **and**

3

• **Aim to eat three meals a day that have been fortified** following the advice below.

1

Aim to have one pint of full fat milk each day



If you currently use skimmed or semi skimmed milk swapping to full fat milk adds extra calories to your diet.

If you use full fat milk, add 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to each pint of milk and mix well – then use this milk to make drinks, on cereal and when cooking

If you use a milk alternative (e.g. soya, almond, hemp, oat, coconut, etc) aim to have one pint a day and choose a higher calorie product where possible.

A milky drink during the evening (at least an hour before bed) adds more calories to your intake.

2

Include two high calorie snacks a day



Including a snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon adds extra calories to your diet.

Eating a little and often is an effective way of spreading your intake over the day which is more helpful if you have a small appetite.

Snacks can be sweet or savoury e.g. full fat yogurts, cheese cubes or triangles, nuts, dried fruit, savoury snacks (crisps, cheesy biscuits, Bombay Mix, nachos,) squares of chocolate, biscuits, cake, tinned fruit with evaporated or condensed milk, manufactured desserts (e.g. chilled or tinned rice pudding or custard, chocolate mousse, trifle, etc).

Over the counter nutritional supplements can be used as snacks which are readily available in supermarkets and pharmacies e.g. Complian®, Meritene® or Nurishment®

Aim to eat three meals a day fortified with other food items to make them more nutritious



Keep meals simple but try to ensure they contain a good source of protein such as meat, fish, cheese, pulses (e.g. lentils, split peas, chick peas, kidney beans), or tofu as well as a starchy food for energy (e.g. bread, potato, rice, pasta, noodles).

Eat pudding with lunch and dinner to top up your intake – add cream, ice cream or sugar.

Sandwiches or wraps can also be a good quick meal – include some cold meat, fish, tofu, eggs or cheese with some salad and serve with some crisps.

Simple meals such as one of the following on toast: cheese, egg, beans, oily fish (e.g. mackerel, pilchards, sardines) are quick to prepare and are nourishing.

Casseroles, fish pie, cottage pie, spaghetti bolognese, chilli con carne, curries, ratatouille, pasta with a sauce and cheese sprinkled on top or a meal cooked in a slow cooker are **very nutritious** and if you batch cook you can freeze or chill the extra to eat another day.

Ready meals (from supermarket chains or companies who deliver to your home) are a convenient alternative to making meals from scratch if you do not want to or cannot cook.

Tinned foods offer a wide range of foods such as meat, fish, pulses, vegetables, fruit, desserts (e.g. rice pudding and custard) and have a long shelf life.

Eat with friends –take it in turns to cook or eat out.

Enriching foods adds extra calories and is helpful if your appetite is small. Enrich foods by adding butter, margarine or oil; cream, Greek yogurt or crème fraiche; full fat mayonnaise or salad cream; peanut, almond or other nut butters; sugar, honey, Golden syrup or jam. Each spoonful of these ‘enrichers’ adds towards an increased calorie intake.

Drinks: 6-8 drinks a day will help you stay hydrated, help your appetite and reduce the risk of falling

Exercise: Taking a walk each day can stimulate your appetite

What about Healthy Eating? For someone at risk of malnutrition, “normal” healthy eating advice does not apply. Some of the suggestions for fortifying your diet are high in fat which some people worry that this will harm their heart. However, malnutrition is a risk to heart health, so treating malnutrition can help to strengthen your heart.