

Build yourself up

Information for patients, families and carers



Contents

Introduction	2
Top tips to build yourself up	2
Adjusting your eating habits	3
Ideas for drinks, snacks and meals	4
Food shopping	9
Suggested meal plan	10
Contact us	12

We've written this booklet as a guide to 'building yourself up' through your diet and eating habits. If you have a poor appetite or have lost weight, we hope the advice in this leaflet will help you to improve your energy levels and keep your strength up.

Top tips to build yourself up

- Eat little and often by having small meals, snacks and nourishing drinks throughout the day.
- Make all your food and drinks as nourishing as possible. We've given you some ideas on page 4.
- Keep quick and tasty snacks nearby, and take some with you when you go out.

Adjusting your eating habits

Simple changes to your eating habits can help to improve your appetite and put on some weight if you need to.

Meal choices and preparation

- Treat yourself to your favourite foods, and have a variety of different meals and snacks.
- Avoid food and drinks labelled as 'diet' or 'light' as these are lower in energy.
- Try using ready-made meals when you don't feel like preparing food.
- Dried, tinned and frozen foods can be easier to prepare and just as nourishing as fresh ingredients, so keep your store cupboard and freezer well-stocked.

Meal times

- If your appetite is better at certain times of the day, take advantage of this and eat a little more at those times.
- Eating meals with friends or family may encourage you to eat more.
- Having drinks at meal times may fill you up before you've finished eating, so try having nourishing drinks between or after meals instead.

Lifestyle changes

- Fresh air and gentle exercise such as walking can help to stimulate your appetite.
- Smoking may reduce your appetite so giving up or cutting back may help too. For help with giving up smoking, talk to your doctor or nurse or contact the Smokefree National Helpline on **0300 123 1044**.

If you are on a special diet

If your doctor or dietitian has advised you to follow a special diet, it's important that you keep to it. Some of the advice in this booklet may not apply to you if your diet avoids certain foods.

- If you have diabetes, keep to a lower sugar diet, even when you are trying to build yourself up. Use low sugar products and avoid adding sugar, honey or syrup to food and drinks.

- If you do not tolerate lactose or dairy products, you can fortify your diet and make nourishing drinks with calcium enriched soya, rice, lactose free or nut milk, yoghurt, and ice-cream alternatives. The recipe for fortified milk contains lactose, so is not suitable for people who are intolerant or allergic to cow's milk.

Some of the ideas in this booklet will be high in sugar so remember to look after your teeth and gums.

Ideas for drinks, snacks and meals

Nutritious drinks

- Try to drink about eight to ten cups of fluid each day.
- Make some of your drinks with fortified milk (using the recipe below), rather than water or normal milk, to make them more nourishing.
- Hot chocolate, coffee or malted drinks can all be made with fortified milk. Try adding whipped cream or marshmallows.
- Add ice cream, yoghurt or cream to your drinks and create different flavours using fruit, honey, milkshake mix or melted chocolate.
- Ready-to-drink milkshakes or smoothies are available from most shops.
- Commercial supplement drinks (such as Complan, Meritene, Aymes retail or Nurishment) may be useful between meals, and can be bought from large chemists or supermarkets.

Recipe for fortified milk

Ingredients

- one pint of full fat/whole milk
- four tablespoons of skimmed milk powder

Method

1. Mix the milk powder with a small amount of the milk to make a paste.
2. Stir in the rest of the milk.
3. Use and store as normal milk.

Nutritious snacks

If you have a poor appetite, you may find it easier to have small snacks rather than big meals. Here are some snack ideas:

- **Jacket potato, toast, sandwiches, rolls, muffins, crumpets or bagels with butter or spread**
Add toppings of cheese, baked beans, scrambled eggs, sardines, pilchards, tinned mackerel, tinned spaghetti or ravioli, hummus or peanut butter.
- **Scones, teacakes or malt loaf**
Add butter or spread and top with marmalade or jam and clotted cream.
- **Omelette with ham or cheese**
- **Mug of creamy soup**
Serve with bread and butter or spread.
- **Ready-to-eat snacks**
Try chicken drumsticks, cold sausages, sausage rolls, pasties, pies, quiches, flans or scotch eggs.
- **Cereal bars, biscuits, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, crisps, chocolates or cakes**
- **Cheese and crackers**
- **Bread sticks with dips**
Try hummus, guacamole or mayonnaise.

Breakfast

- **Cooked breakfast**

Choose a selection of foods you enjoy such as eggs, bacon, sausages, baked beans, mushrooms and tomatoes.

- **Toast with plenty of butter or spread**

Try topping with jam, chocolate spread or peanut butter, or if you fancy something savoury you could try cold meats or cheese.

- **Cereals**

Add fortified milk, yoghurt or evaporated milk. Try adding sugar, honey, syrup or jam or mix in dried fruit, seeds or nuts.

- **Baked beans or tinned spaghetti on toast**

Add grated cheese if you like.

- **Eggs, cooked any way**

Use fortified milk and butter, spread, olive oil or vegetable oil. Add cheese or meat when making omelettes.

- **Oily fish, such as kippers, mackerel, smoked haddock or kedgeree**

Serve with bread and plenty of butter or spread.

- **Yoghurt**

Choose thick and creamy versions and top with fruit, nuts, seeds or cereals.

- **Porridge**

Make your porridge with fortified milk, add cream and serve with sugar or jam.

Main meals

Meat, fish, dairy and vegetarian alternatives

These foods are rich in protein which is needed for growth and repair and will help to build you up. You should try to include at least one of these in every meal:

- **meat** (fresh, frozen or tinned)
- **fish** (fresh, frozen, tinned or boil in the bag)
- **dairy products** (including milk and cheese)
- **eggs**
- **beans and pulses** (including baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas or lentils)
- **soya products** (such as Quorn™, tofu or textured vegetable protein)

Potatoes, pasta, rice and noodles

These types of food are a good source of energy. Follow the tips below to make them as nourishing as possible:

- **Potatoes**

Potatoes can be served as chips, roasted, sautéed or mashed, boiled or baked. Add butter or spread and cheese.

- **Mashed potato**

When making mashed potato, try adding milk (ideally fortified), cream, cheese or mayonnaise.

- **Pasta and noodles**

Stir oil, butter or spread through before serving. Serve with a creamy or cheese sauce, or add cream cheese to pesto or tomato-based sauces and top with grated cheddar.

- **Rice**

Rice can be steamed, boiled or fried with egg. Serve with a creamy sauce or cook with coconut milk. Try risotto cooked with cream and cheese with added meat, fish or seafood.

Vegetables and salad

It's important to include vegetables and salad in your diet as they contain vitamins and minerals. However, they are low in energy and protein and can be filling. Try the following ideas to make them more nourishing:

- Fry vegetables in oil, butter or spread and add grated cheese.
- Add a cheese or white sauce to cauliflower, broccoli and leeks.
- When making a salad, add meat, fish, egg, cheese, olives, avocado, croutons, dried fruit, seeds or nuts and serve with salad cream or mayonnaise.

Increase the energy in your food

- Always choose full fat products and avoid 'diet', 'light' and 'low fat' foods.
- Add butter, spread or oil to foods such as vegetables.
- Add grated cheese, cream or skimmed milk powder to soups, casseroles and mashed potatoes.
- Use fortified milk (see recipe on page 4) instead of your usual milk.
- Serve meals with cheese, white or parsley sauce made with fortified milk (sauces can help if you have a dry or sore mouth or need a soft diet).
- Add accompaniments such as mayonnaise, salad cream or sour cream, or dips such as hummus or guacamole.

Desserts

Most desserts are high in energy and can be eaten between or after meals. Avoid low-fat or diet varieties. Good choices include:

- **Shop-bought puddings**
Try chocolate mousse, crème caramel, thick and creamy yoghurts, rice pudding, cheesecake, cream cakes, sponge puddings, trifle or fruit fools.
- **Pies, crumbles, pastries, sponges or cakes**
Serve with cream, ice cream or custard.
- **Ice cream or ice cream bars**
Try Magnum, Snickers, 'choc ices' or similar.

- **Milk puddings**

Try making rice pudding, semolina, tapioca, sago or macaroni with fortified milk. Stir in extra cream, evaporated milk or jam.

- **Instant desserts**

You can make blancmange, whips, custards and jelly with fortified milk.

- **Individual rice puddings**

Add a spoonful of jam.

- **Thick and creamy yoghurt**

Add a handful of nuts and dried fruit.

Food shopping

If it's difficult to get to the shops, you may want to try buying your groceries online (when the supermarket delivers your groceries to your door). Check your supermarket's website or ask them for information next time you visit.

Ask your family or friends to help you set it up if you're not sure how to get started.

Alternatively, you could ask your family or friends to help you get your shopping, or give them a list and ask them to do it for you.

Meal delivery

Some companies will deliver hot, ready-to-eat or frozen meals directly to your door. For details of local providers, contact your healthcare professional or social worker.

Suggested meal plan

You may like to use this example menu as a guide when planning your meals. We've suggested some different options for each meal and snack:

Breakfast

Porridge made with fortified milk and topped with jam
or
cooked breakfast: bacon, sausage, tomato and egg with buttered toast

Mid-morning snack

milky coffee and a piece of malt loaf topped with butter or spread
and marmalade

Lunch

macaroni cheese
or
beef lasagne
or
jacket potato topped with butter or spread, cheese and baked beans

crème caramel for dessert

Mid-afternoon snack

breadsticks with hummus and olives
or
slice of chocolate cake

homemade milkshake made with fortified milk, vanilla ice cream
and banana

Evening meal

chicken and vegetable casserole served with potato, mashed with cream
and cheese
or
sandwich with tuna mayonnaise and cheese

individual cheesecake for dessert

Evening or bedtime snack

buttered crumpet topped with jam
or
cheese and biscuits

hot chocolate or malted milk drink made with fortified milk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please telephone our dietetics team on:

023 8120 6072

Dietetics, and speech and language therapy

Southampton General Hospital

Tremona Road

Southampton

Hampshire

SO16 6YD

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

www.uhs.nhs.uk

© 2022 University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright holder.

Version 3. Published November 2022. Due for review November 2025. 1841