

# Practical food suggestions for people who are malnourished

Healthy eating guidelines promote low fat and low sugar food choices. Patients who are malnourished or losing weight unintentionally, however, must rely on fat and sugar as concentrated sources of calories. The benefit of energy dense foods in these circumstances should be explained to patients and carers to assist compliance. Ideally fats should be heart healthy (oils, margarines, seeds and nuts) but with the priority being to ensure an energy dense intake. Calories from butter, cream, full fat milk and cheese can be utilised.

General suggestions for a Food First approach may include:

- Three small meals with snacks in-between every day
- Two courses for each of the three meals (see below for ideas)
- Add oil, butter, margarine, cream, cheese, dressings, sauces, sugar, honey and spreads to meals and snacks to boost energy intake
- Choose nourishing fluids such as milky drinks, soups or fruit juice instead of water or tea
- Make dessert a regular option rather than a treat

## Meal and snack suggestions

- Breakfast:
  - Porridge made with milk plus added cream and sugar, followed by toast with liberal amounts of butter or margarine and spreads
  - Scrambled eggs with added cheese and bacon followed by yoghurt and fruit
- Light meal
  - Thick milk based soup with a protein (meat, egg, cheese or canned fish) and salad filled sandwich or cheese on toast

- Baked beans on toast with added grated cheese followed by dessert

- Main meal

- Meat, fish, chicken or eggs and include potato, rice or pasta, vegetables or salad with added butter/margarine and grated cheese, dressings, gravies or sauces
- If tolerated, use high fat cooking methods such as roasting or frying

- Dessert

- Custard, ice-cream, instant puddings, mousses or yoghurt with fruit and cream
- Milk puddings such as creamy rice, sago or baked custards
- Ready-made baked or sponge puddings with fruit plus cream or ice-cream

- Snacks

- Crackers and cheese, hummus, cottage cheese, cream cheese or dips
- Scones, pikelets, english muffins, crumpets or toast with liberal spreads
- Dried fruit and nuts (with a little chocolate if enjoyed)
- Protein filled sandwiches
- Sweet muffins, cakes and pastries

Other beneficial products available in supermarkets include Complian, Vitaplan and Up & Go. These products are not nutritionally complete and should not be used as a sole source of nutrition. They can, however, be used as part of the Food First approach as the overall emphasis for these patients should be eating foods high in calories and protein.



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