Increasing your dietary intake – advice for individuals with diabetes

Introduction

Eating well is essential to help you recover from illness or surgery. If you have a low appetite and/or you have lost weight unintentionally, you may benefit from making some changes to your diet to increase your calorie and protein intake.

The information in this leaflet may differ from the advice you have been given in the past however getting enough nutrition is the priority at the moment.

Your dietitian can advise you when you need to return to your usual diet. Eating differently may affect your blood glucose levels. Please contact your GP or diabetes specialist nurse if your blood glucose levels are much higher or lower than normal.

Tips to increase your calorie and protein intake

- You may find it easier to have smaller meals and snacks. Try to aim for 3 small meals and 3 snacks per day
- Have your main meals at the times of day when you feel most well
- Keep a stock of easy to prepare foods at home, e.g. tinned fish / meat / vegetables / beans / soups, dried mashed potato, ready meals, cereals / porridge, and instant puddings
- If you feel full easily, try taking drinks after your meals
- Fortify your meals and snacks with high calorie high protein ingredients (see table below labelled “Food Fortification Ideas”)
- Choose full fat versions of foods, e.g. yoghurts, spreads, sauces
- Aim to have at least 1 pint of full fat / whole milk daily. You could use it to make milkshakes / smoothies, add to cereal, tea, coffee or soup
- Make the most of the days you feel most well to prepare meals that can be stored in the freezer
- Regular exercise can help to increase your appetite and improve your strength. Start slowly and gradually increase the intensity as you feel able

Aim for a wide variety of foods to ensure you gain a sufficient range of nutrients

- Include a portion of starchy carbohydrates at each meal as they are a good energy source, e.g. bread, rice, pasta, potatoes, noodles, cereals, chapatti. Wholegrain carbohydrates are usually better for managing your blood glucose levels
- Include 2–3 portions of protein rich foods daily, e.g. meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses

- Milk and dairy products are a good source of calcium, which is important for bone health. Aim for 2–3 servings per day, e.g. 1/3 pint of milk, 125g yoghurt, 30g cheese. If you do not consume dairy products, try unsweetened dairy free alternatives enriched with calcium
- It is still important to eat a range of fruit and vegetables as they provide essential vitamins and minerals, aim for 5 different portions per day. Spread handful sized portions of fruit across the day; you could mix a portion into a milkshake or serve with full fat yoghurt or double cream

Food fortification ideas

Ingredient	**To add to…**
Full fat milk or "fortified milk" (recipe is below)	Soups, cereals, milkshakes, smoothies
Skimmed milk powder	Milky drinks
Full fat cheese	Soups, casseroles, pasta dishes
Double cream	Soups, porridge, rice pudding, fruit
Nuts and seeds	Porridge, cereal, soups, salads
Mayonnaise	Sandwiches, salads
Oils or spreads, e.g. rapeseed and olive	Meals and dressings
Dried fruit	Cereal, porridge
Peanut butter	Porridge, smoothies
Avocado	Salads, soups, smoothies

Quick and easy meal ideas

- Pasta with tinned fish, pesto, feta cheese and cherry tomatoes
- Egg noodles with meat / prawns / Quorn, vegetable stir fry mix and pre-made stir fry sauce (try to avoid very sweet flavours such as lemon, sweet and sour or sweet chilli).
- Jacket potato or toast with cheese / tinned fish / egg mayonnaise / reduced sugar baked beans
- Sandwich with chicken mayonnaise / peanut butter + banana / cottage cheese + cucumber
- A small portion of leftover meat or vegetable curry with a piece of wholegrain bread or small wholemeal chapatti
- Omelette with ham / cheese / cooked chicken / Quorn
- Wholemeal bagel with avocado / smoked salmon / cream cheese / peanut butter
- Tinned soup with croutons and grated cheese, served with a wholegrain slice of bread and butter
- Tinned macaroni cheese / ravioli
- Cold meat with instant mashed potato and gravy

Snack ideas

Savoury	Sweet
Cheese and crackers (175kcal, 9g protein)	Full fat yoghurt (150kcal, 5g protein)
Handful of unsalted nuts (160kcal, 5g protein)	Pot of pre-made rice pudding or custard (125kcal, 4g protein)
Samosa or pakora or spring roll (110-130kcal, 3–4g protein)	1 portion of fruit with double cream (165kcal, 1g protein)
Meat or meat alternative snack bites such as sausage rolls, cocktail sausages, scotch eggs (35kcal, 1g protein each)	Cereal with full fat milk (275kcal, 11g protein)
Hummus with crackers or mini wholemeal pitta bread (165kcal, 5g protein)	1 heaped tablespoon of dried fruit (100kcal, 1g protein)
Toast or crumpet with cream cheese or peanut butter or avocado (180-195kcal, 4–7g protein)	Tea cake or scone or malt loaf with reduced sugar jam (avoid having >2 tbsp daily) (250kcal, 4g protein)
Boiled egg (70kcal, 6g protein)	Small slice of plain cake with cream or custard (260kcal, 5g protein)

Calorie and protein values are an estimation and will vary.

Nourishing drinks

Fortified Milk (580kcal, 40g protein)
568ml (1 pint) whole milk
4 heaped tablespoons of skimmed milk powder (e.g. Marvel or supermarket own brand)
Add the skimmed milk powder to a little whole milk to make a paste. Then whisk in the remainder of the milk. This milk can then be used in drinks and meals as normal.

Banana Delight (320kcal, 15g protein)
300ml whole milk with 1 heaped tablespoon of milk powder
1 chopped small banana
Teaspoon of cinnamon

Red Berry Whirl (340kcal, 20g protein)
200ml (1/3 pint) whole milk with 1 heaped tablespoon of milk powder
150g pot full fat plain yoghurt
5 strawberries
1 handful of raspberries

Creamy Soup (300kcal, 15g protein)
200ml (1/3 pint) whole milk
1 heaped tablespoon of milk powder
1 packet of soup

Creamy Coffee or Hot Chocolate (300kcal, 11g protein)
150ml whole milk
1 heaped tablespoon of skimmed milk powder
1 heaped tablespoon double cream
1 teaspoon coffee powder or 3 teaspoons of low sugar hot chocolate e.g. cocoa with sweetener,
Options or Highlights

Supplements

Supplement shakes and soups, such as Build Up and Complan are available from the chemist or large supermarkets. Your Dietitian can advise if you need these drinks.

Your dietitian will also advise if you require any nutritional supplements on prescription from your GP.

Nausea and vomiting

If you are on insulin or medications called sulphonylureas (e.g. gliclazide, glimepiride, glipizide), it is even more important that you eat regularly.

If you are struggling to maintain a normal meal pattern, try having snacks little and often throughout the day.

If you vomit, try to eat or drink again to reduce the risk of hypoglycaemia (if you are on insulin or a sulphonylurea)

If you are having problems managing any food, try the alternatives listed below, aim for 1–2 servings 4–5 times a day.

- 1 cup of milk
- 1 small glass of fruit juice, full sugar lemonade/coke/Lucozade
- 1 scoop of ice cream
- 1 pot of fruit yoghurt
- ½ pot jelly

REMEMBER: if you are struggling to eat and/or vomiting, keep checking your blood glucose levels and contact your Diabetes Team for advice.

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