

## High protein high energy eating in hospital

This resource provides high protein high energy eating ideas to help prevent further weight or muscle loss, or to assist with weight gain while you are in hospital. The hospital menu has high protein high energy food and drink options. Ask your nurse or dietitian for the hospital menu.

### Why do I need to focus on eating well when I am being less active in hospital?

When you are sick, it is common to lose weight and muscle. Even if you are being less active than you normally would, your body still requires enough energy and protein to protect, heal and recover from illness and infection.

### Why do you need a high protein, high energy diet?

- You are underweight
- You are losing weight without trying
- You are unable to eat enough due to poor appetite or nausea
- You have increased energy and protein needs
- You are at risk of malnutrition or are malnourished

### Eating a high protein, high energy diet can:

- Prevent weight loss or help with weight gain
- Help you recover more quickly
- Help you build strength
- Increase or maintain your energy levels

### Malnutrition or not getting enough nutrition can:

- Increase chances of infection and pressure injury (bed sores)
- Slow down wound healing
- Increase length of time in hospital
- Increase chances of returning to hospital
- Increased risk of falls and loss of strength
- Make it more difficult to return home and live independently

## What does following a high protein, high energy diet mean?

**Energy** refers to the kilojoules (or calories) in our food and drinks. Some foods have more energy than others. Getting enough energy is important to maintain weight and manage daily activities.

**Protein** is used to build, maintain and repair tissues in the body. Protein can also be used as a source of energy. Your muscles are made of protein - eating enough protein can help minimise muscle loss.

High protein foods	High energy foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Red meat (e.g. beef), poultry (e.g. chicken), fish or meat alternatives (e.g. tofu, falafel)</li><li>• Eggs</li><li>• Dairy foods: milk, milk alternatives, cheese, yoghurt, custard</li><li>• Nuts and seeds</li><li>• Beans (chickpeas, cannellini, lentils, black, kidney, baked)</li><li>• High protein drinks or nutritional supplements e.g. Sustagen, Ensure, Up &amp; Go Protein Energize</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Butter, cream, margarine, oil, avocado</li><li>• Sour cream, mayonnaise, creamy salad dressing</li><li>• Chocolate, lollies, ice-cream, sweet biscuits, desserts</li><li>• Sugar, honey, jam, dried fruit</li><li>• Soft drinks, cordial, juice</li></ul>

### If you have a poor appetite and/or feel full quickly:

- Aim for 6 smaller meals per day.
- Eat your protein first (e.g. meat or plant based protein).
- Choose nutritious drinks (e.g. plain or flavoured milk, nutritional supplements, milo made on milk) instead of tea, coffee, water, and sip on them throughout your meal/day.
- Choose high protein, high energy small snacks between meals.
- Sitting out of bed (if possible) makes hospital mealtimes feel more normal.  
Moving around and getting out of bed can help increase your appetite.
- Encourage visitors to eat with you at mealtimes to make meals more enjoyable.
- Add a dessert to every meal.

**Don't be afraid to ask for help with your meals!** Staff, family or friends can help you complete your menu, open tricky food packages, cut up your food and feed you if you are unable to feed yourself.

## **High protein, high energy meal and snack ideas**

### Breakfast

- Choose a high protein choice everyday (e.g. eggs, baked beans, savoury mince)
- Add honey, sugar or cream to your porridge and coffee
- Add butter and spreads to your bread

### Lunch and dinner

- Add butter or margarine to the vegetables
- Add high energy sauces e.g. mayonnaise, gravy, barbecue sauce to your meals
- Add cream to your soup
- Ask for a double serve of the protein part of your meal
- Choose a sandwich as well as your hot meal or salad

### Dessert

- Choose a dessert high in energy and protein instead of fruit and eat your dessert first if you are unable to finish your meal
- Order two or three dessert options
- Order a side of ice-cream, cream, or yoghurt
- Eat dessert as a snack between meals

### Snacks

- Ask for/order your favourite snacks e.g. cheese and biscuits, yoghurt, custard, chocolate, chips
- Order an extra snack at meal times and save it for later
- Ask visitors to bring your favourite snacks
- Keep your snacks within easy reach
- Don't rely on your appetite – try to eat something every 2-3 hours.

## Summary

- Eat a high protein, high energy diet to help with recovery and prevent weight loss
- Eat high energy, high protein foods throughout the day
- Aim for 6 small meals and prioritise protein and/or desserts to maximise your energy and protein intake.

Your Dietitian has recommended you to:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

For further information, contact your dietitian or nutritionist \_\_\_\_\_