

Cystic Fibrosis and High Energy Diet

This material will help you understand why people with cystic fibrosis (CF) need a high energy diet and practical tips for high energy eating.

Higher energy needs

People with CF generally need 20-50% more energy in their diet than people who do not have CF. Energy refers to the kilojoules or calories in our food and drinks that provide fuel for our body. A diet high in fat, carbohydrate and protein is very important to meet increased energy needs. This will help you to aim for a healthy weight, be physically active and overcome infections.

Why is a high energy diet important?

Most people with CF have higher than normal energy requirements due to:

- Malabsorption (where your body does not absorb nutrients properly)
- Increased work of breathing (lungs need energy to breathe)
- Fighting chest infections.

If the body does not get enough energy from your food intake, it breaks down fat and muscle stores to provide extra energy. This can lead to a poor nutritional status. It may also have an effect on lung function. Supplying the body with plenty of energy in the form of food can help to avoid fat and muscle breakdown.

There may be times when a chest infection causes you to have a poor appetite. Your energy intake may be easier to take in the form of drinks at these times.

High energy foods include:

- Full cream dairy products e.g. milk, cheese, yoghurt, cream, ice cream
- Margarine, butter, salad dressings, oil
- Soft drinks, cordial, chocolates, sweets, cakes, biscuits, nuts
- Meat, fish, chicken, eggs, legumes
- Nutrition supplements (e.g. *Resource Plus, Sustagen, Polyjoule & Scandishake*)

Tips for high energy eating:

- Eat more often if you can't eat a lot. If 3 big meals a day is too filling, aim for 6 smaller meals spread throughout the day.
- Have energy rich drinks like milk, juice, cordial or soft drink, instead of tea, coffee or water.
- Keep favourite foods and ready-to-eat meals and snacks handy for times when you don't feel like preparing food. e.g. tinned soups, frozen meals, yoghurt, nuts, cheese, biscuits and dips.
- Keep a record of your weight to see if these changes are working.
- As you start to improve and your activity level increases, you may need to increase your food intake as well.

Further NEMO resources

The following resources will give you more ideas on how to achieve a diet high in energy and protein:

- High Protein High Energy Diet
- High Protein High Energy Drinks
- High Protein High Energy Recipes
- Eating Well and Cystic Fibrosis (provides a suggested meal plan)

Ask your dietitian for a copy of these resources.

Things I can do to try to maximise my energy intake:

1.

2.

3.

For more information, contact your Dietitian or Cystic Fibrosis Centre:
