Cystic Fibrosis and High Energy Diet

People with cystic fibrosis (CF) generally need 20-50% more energy in their diet than people who do not have CF. A diet high in fat, carbohydrate and protein is really important to meet increased energy needs. This will help you to aim for a healthy weight, be physically active and overcome infections.

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 (Resource Plus, Sustagen, Polyjoule & Scandishake)

Tips for high energy eating:
- Eat more often if you can’t eat a lot. Aim for 6 smaller meals rather than 3 big meals a day, which may be too filling.
- 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.
The NEMO resources titled “High Protein High Energy Diet”, “High Protein High Energy Drinks” and “High Protein High Energy Recipes” will give you more ideas about how to achieve a diet high in energy and protein. The resource “Eating Well with Cystic Fibrosis” provides a suggested meal plan. Ask your dietitian for a copy of these resources.

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

1. 

2. 

3. 

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