

Promoting Healthy Weight Gain

A child with special needs may be underweight for a number of reasons. For example, children who find it physically difficult to swallow, chew, or get food to their mouths may not get enough food to meet their energy needs for growth and development. Children with heart defects often need extra calories to gain weight and maintain their weight before and after surgery. Children with heart and lung problems may have difficulty breathing, which increases their energy needs above that of other children. Children with cystic fibrosis may have lung congestion and breathing problems and are not able to digest foods very efficiently. Thus, they need to eat more to promote a normal rate of weight gain. Whatever the situation, here are some suggestions to help children eat enough to reach a healthy weight and maintain a normal growth rate.

Offer Frequent Meals and Snacks

Young children have smaller stomach capacity and need to eat more often than older children and adults. For this reason, they need regular meals (usually three meals per day) with snacks in between (two or three snacks per day). Children may not eat much food at any one meal, but if they eat some at every meal and snack they are more likely to get the food they need. It is best to plan for snacks so the child does not eat them “on the run.” When leaving home, bringing along appropriate snack foods will prevent the child from skipping a meal or snack. Space snack times throughout the day to allow a child to be hungry for the snack and hungry at the meal. Offer a variety of foods at each meal and at each snack.

Provide High-Calorie, Nutrient-Dense Foods

High-calorie, nutrient-dense foods are those that provide more energy (calories) and nutrients than other foods for the same serving size. For example, a green salad provides just a few calories and nutrients but requires a lot of chewing to eat it. A higher-calorie, more nutrient-dense choice is chopped, steamed broccoli with cheese sauce — more calories and nutrients in less volume. Children who need to gain weight need more of the high-calorie, nutrient-dense foods so they get the nutrition they need in a smaller amount of food.

Boost Calories and Protein

Calories are a measure of energy — the body uses calories from food for normal activities and growth. Calories come from fats, carbohydrates, and proteins found in food. Fat provides about two times more calories per tablespoon than protein or carbohydrates. For this reason, adding foods that contain some fat is one way to add calories for children who need to gain weight (and who are already getting enough nutrients), without offering too much food. Protein is not as high in calories as fat, but it is important for growth and healing. Foods high in protein also give children other important nutrients, like vitamins and minerals. It is best to offer nutrient-dense and/or high-calorie foods early in the meal when a child is the most hungry.



STRATEGIES

...for Children Who Are Underweight

ASSESS FURTHER	PLAN FOR ACTION
<p>Is the child's weight for height equal to or below the 5th percentile? Or has the child lost any weight or not been gaining weight recently? If yes, identify possible contributors to underweight by asking the child's parent/ caregiver the questions below.</p>	<p>With the child's parent/caregiver, develop a plan using the suggestions below and the education materials in this section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Choose What You Can Use: Ways to Help a Child Who Is Underweight</i> ◆ <i>Choose High Calorie Food Choices for the Child Who Needs to Gain Weight</i> ◆ <i>Hiding Extra Calories booklet (back pocket)</i>
<p>1. Is the child offered three meals and two to three snacks daily?</p>	<p>1. If the answer is no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer food and formula or milk at least five times a day. Children have small stomachs and need to eat more often than adults. ◆ If the child is a slow eater, try foods that are easy to chew and swallow. ◆ If the child does not finish all the food offered at a meal, offer smaller portions and then additional foods at a snack time.
<p>2. Is the child willing to eat the amounts of food recommended for his or her weight?</p> <p>See the <i>Food Guidelines for Children</i> section for recommended amounts.</p>	<p>2. If the answer is no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop an eating plan that includes three meals and three snacks daily. ◆ See <i>Inadequate Intake</i> section.
<p>3. Is the child able to eat the amount of food recommended for his or her weight?</p> <p>Review the <i>Daily Food Guide</i> information in the <i>Inadequate Intake</i> section.</p>	<p>3. If the answer is no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The child will need to eat higher calorie, more nutritious foods. Together with the parent/caregiver, select at least one higher calorie food to offer at each meal. Refer to education materials in this section for ideas. ◆ Offer high calorie foods early in the meal when the child is the most hungry. ◆ The child may need help with feeding. See the <i>Feeding Skills</i> section.

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ASSESS FURTHER

4. Does the child have difficulty with feeding and swallowing?
- ◆ Does the child cough, choke, or gulp during eating or immediately after?
 - ◆ Does the child have difficulty swallowing?
 - ◆ Does the child need to swallow repeatedly to clear food?
 - ◆ Does food remain in the mouth after the child has swallowed?
 - ◆ Does the child drool a lot?
 - ◆ Does the child have difficulty gaining weight?
 - ◆ Is it suspected that the child aspirates (breathes food into the lungs)?
 - ◆ Does the child have a history of chronic lung difficulties including aspiration pneumonia (more than 3 to 4 times per year)?

PLAN FOR ACTION

4. If the answer to any question is yes:
- ◆ Refer the child to his/her physician for a referral to a feeding therapist (occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) or a speech pathologist) or a feeding team for a feeding assessment.
 - ◆ Also, see the *Feeding Skills* section.



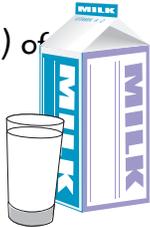
Ways to Help a Child Who Is Underweight

RECIPE

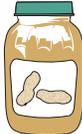
HIGHER CALORIE MILK

Mix 1 cup of powdered milk into 1 quart (4 cups) of whole milk.

Stir well.



You can help your child gain weight by “sneaking” extra calories and protein into your child’s favorite foods. Here are a few suggestions. Try the ones that will work best for you and your child.

- ◆ Use “higher calorie milk” (see recipe in box) or evaporated milk in recipes for pudding, gelatin, custard, cocoa, milk shakes, hot cereal, mashed potatoes, or cream soups.
- ◆ Add powdered milk to yogurt, gravies, mashed potatoes, hot cereal, or to recipes for muffins, cakes, and cookies.
- ◆ Add grated cheese to rice, vegetables, pasta, or eggs. 
- ◆ Grind nuts finely and add them to hot cereal, vegetables, or ice cream.
- ◆ Add eggs to casseroles before baking, or add cooked eggs to mixed dishes.
- ◆ Spread peanut butter on toast or pancakes, or add it to muffin recipes. (Peanut butter can be a choking hazard for children under age three years.)
- ◆ Add small pieces of cooked meat, fish, chicken, turkey, tofu, or hard-cooked eggs to canned soup or salads. 
- ◆ Add wheat germ to mashed or sliced bananas, hot or cold cereal, yogurt, ice cream, pancakes, pudding, or recipes for muffins, cakes, and cookies.
- ◆ Make gelatin with fruit juice or “higher calorie milk” (see recipe in box) instead of water. Add small pieces of canned or soft fresh fruits to gelatin before it sets. 
- ◆ Add small pieces of dried fruits (raisins, prunes, apricots) to hot cereal or homemade muffins. Use caution: young children may choke on larger pieces of hard, dried fruit.
- ◆ Dip fresh fruit in wheat germ or peanut butter. (Peanut butter can be a choking hazard for children under age three years.) 



Maneras de Ayudar a un Niño que Está Bajo de Peso

RECETA

LECHE ALTA EN CALORÍAS

1 taza de leche en polvo mezclada con 4 tazas de leche en líquido.

Mezcle bien.



Agregando más calorías y proteína a las comidas favoritas de su niño, Ud. le puede ayudar a que aumente de peso. Aquí hay algunas sugerencias. Escoja las sugerencias que funcionen mejor para Ud. y su hijo.

- ◆ En sus recetas de pudín, flan, gelatina, licuados, atoles y sopas de crema, use leche evaporada o “leche alta en calorías” (vea la receta en la caja).
- ◆ Agregue leche en polvo al yogurt, aderezos, puré de papas, atoles, y a sus recetas de pan, pasteles y galletas.
- ◆ Agregue queso rayado al arroz, a las verduras, pastas y huevos.
- ◆ Agregue nueces bien molidas a los cereales, verduras y nieves (helados).



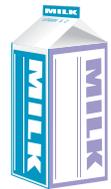
- ◆ Agregue huevos a sus recetas antes de cocer o huevos cocidos en sus platillos.
- ◆ Ponga crema de maní (cacahuete) a los panes, pancakes (buñuelos) o panecillos. (Los niños menores de 3 años se pueden atragantar con la crema de maní).

- ◆ Agregue pedacitos de carne, pollo, tofu o huevo cocido a las ensaladas y sopas.



- ◆ Agregue germen de trigo o plátanos (guineos) a los cereales, yogurts, nieves, pancakes (buñuelos), pudines, y a las recetas de panecillos, pasteles o galletas.

- ◆ En vez de usar agua para preparar gelatinas use jugos de fruta o “leche alta en calorías” (receta en la caja). Agregue pedacitos de fruta enlatada o fresca antes de que se endurezca la gelatina.



- ◆ Agregue pedacitos de fruta seca (pasas, ciruelas, chabacanos, albaricoques) a los cereales o panecillos hechos en casa. Tenga cuidado con la fruta seca porque los niños pequeños se pueden atragantar.

- ◆ Agregue germen de trigo o crema de maní (cacahuete) a las frutas frescas. (Los niños menores de 3 años se pueden atragantar con la crema de maní).

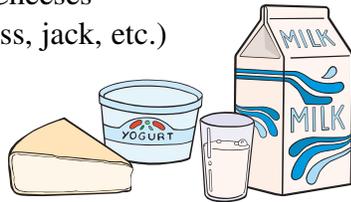


High Calorie Food Choices for the Child Who Needs to Gain Weight

All children need foods from each food group every day. Children who need to gain weight should eat the foods listed here because these foods are highest in calories and nutrients.

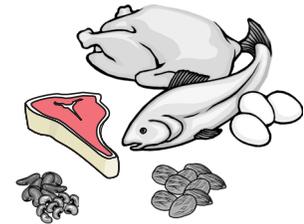
MILK, YOGURT, & CHEESE

- ◆ Whole Milk
- ◆ Chocolate Milk
- ◆ Fruit Yogurt made with whole milk
- ◆ Cottage Cheese made with whole milk
- ◆ Egg Nog
- ◆ Pudding
- ◆ Custard
- ◆ Milk Shakes
- ◆ Whole Milk Cheeses (cheddar, Swiss, jack, etc.)



MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, DRY BEANS, EGGS, & NUTS

- ◆ Beef, Pork, Lamb (chuck, ground, ribs)
- ◆ Chicken (thigh)
- ◆ Fish, shrimp*
- ◆ Sausage
- ◆ Fried Meats
- ◆ Cooked Dry Beans
- ◆ Refried Beans
- ◆ Peanut Butter
- ◆ Almond Butter
- ◆ Nuts and Seeds
- ◆ Fried Tofu



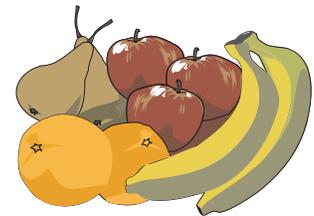
VEGETABLES

- ◆ Carrots (cooked)
- ◆ Broccoli*
- ◆ Spinach, Bok Choy, Leafy Greens*
- ◆ Any other fresh or frozen vegetable*
- ◆ Peas, Corn
- ◆ Potatoes
- ◆ Fried Vegetables
- ◆ Creamed Vegetables



FRUITS

- ◆ Banana, Apple
- ◆ Orange*
- ◆ Any other fresh or frozen fruit*
- ◆ Fruit Juice
- ◆ Canned Fruit
- ◆ Dried Fruit
- ◆ Avocado



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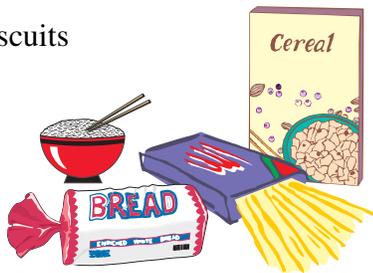
* Foods marked with an asterisk (*) are lower in calories and/or fat but still very nutritious.
Underlined foods may pose a choking hazard to children under age three years—use caution.



CHOOSE WHAT YOU CAN USE

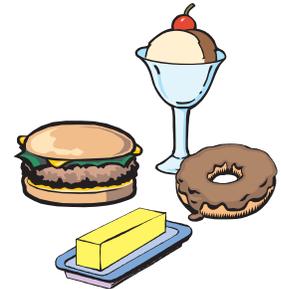
BREAD, CEREAL, RICE & PASTA

- ◆ Bread
- ◆ Tortillas (flour)
- ◆ Rice: fried
- ◆ Noodles: buttered
- ◆ Hot Cereals
- ◆ Sweetened Cereals
- ◆ Pancakes, Waffles
- ◆ French Toast
- ◆ Muffins, Biscuits



SWEETS, FATS & COMBINATION FOODS

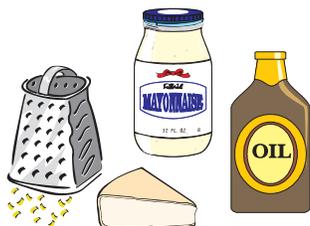
- ◆ Ice Cream
- ◆ Pie, Cake
- ◆ Donuts
- ◆ Cookies
- ◆ Bacon, Olives
- ◆ Butter, Margarine
- ◆ Oils, Salad Dressings
- ◆ Mayonnaise
- ◆ Pizza
- ◆ Spaghetti with Meat
- ◆ Quesadilla
- ◆ Hamburger
- ◆ Cheeseburger
- ◆ Enchilada
- ◆ Tamale
- ◆ Coconut Milk, Coconut



You can easily add the foods listed below to other foods. This adds calories without increasing the amount of food, which is important for children with small appetites. Adding small amounts of higher fat foods may help some children gain needed weight.

HIGH FAT FOODS

- ◆ Cooking oil
- ◆ Mayonnaise
- ◆ Cream sauce
- ◆ Salad dressing
- ◆ Gravy
- ◆ Dips
- ◆ Sour Cream
- ◆ Butter
- ◆ Margarine
- ◆ Cream cheese



HIGH CALORIE HIGH NUTRIENT FOODS

- ◆ Dry milk
- ◆ Instant Breakfast Drink
- ◆ Ovaltine®
- ◆ Cheese, cheese sauce
- ◆ Raisins, other dried fruit
- ◆ Wheat germ

COMPLETE SUPPLEMENTS SUCH AS:

- ◆ Pediasure®
- ◆ Kindercal®
- ◆ Resource for Kids®
- ◆ Ensure®
- ◆ Sustacal®/Boost®



Comidas Altas en Calorías para el Niño que Necesita Aumentar de Peso

Todos los niños necesitan comer de todos los grupos de alimentos todos los días. Los niños que necesitan aumentar de peso deben comer estas comidas porque son más altas en calorías y nutrición.

LECHE, YOGURT, Y QUESO

- ◆ Leche entera
- ◆ Leche de chocolate
- ◆ Yogurt hecho con leche entera
- ◆ Requesón hecho con leche entera
- ◆ Rompopo (egg nog)
- ◆ Pudín
- ◆ Flan
- ◆ Licuados de leche
- ◆ Quesos hechos con leche entera (como cheddar, swiss, monterey jack, etc.)



CARNE, POLLO, PAVO, PESCADO, FRIJOLES, HUEVOS Y NUECES

- ◆ Carne de res, puerco, borrego (carne molida, “chuck” y costillas)
- ◆ Pollo (muslo)
- ◆ Pescado y camarones*
- ◆ Salchichas
- ◆ Carnes fritas
- ◆ Frijoles cocidos
- ◆ Frijoles refritos
- ◆ Crema de maní (cacahuete)
- ◆ Crema de almendras
- ◆ Nueces y semillas
- ◆ Tofu frito



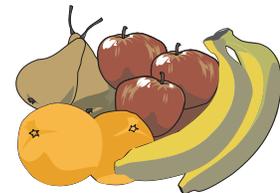
VERDURAS

- ◆ Zanahorias (cocidas)
- ◆ Brocoli*
- ◆ Espinaca, bok choy, hojas verdes*
- ◆ Otras verduras frescas o congeladas*
- ◆ Chícharos, maíz
- ◆ Papas
- ◆ Verduras fritas
- ◆ Verduras en crema



FRUTAS

- ◆ Plátanos (guineos), manzanas
- ◆ Naranjas*
- ◆ Otras frutas frescas o congeladas*
- ◆ Jugos de fruta
- ◆ Frutas enlatadas
- ◆ Frutas secas
- ◆ Aguacates



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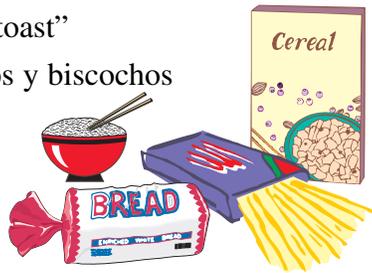
**Las comidas con una * después de ellas son bajas en calorías y grasas pero son muy nutritivas. Comidas subrayadas pueden causar que se atraganten los niños menores de tres años — tener cuidado.*



ESCOJA LO QUE PUEDA USAR

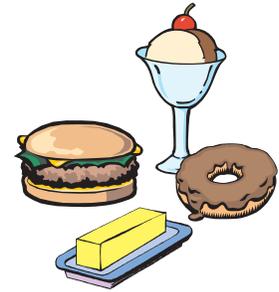
PANES, CERALES, ARROZ Y PASTAS

- ◆ Pan
- ◆ Tortillas de harina
- ◆ Arroz frito
- ◆ Pasta con mantequilla
- ◆ Cereales calientes
- ◆ Cereales endulzados
- ◆ “Pancakes”, “waffles”
- ◆ “French toast”
- ◆ Panecillos y biscochos



COMIDAS DULCES, GRASAS Y COMIDAS COMBINADAS

- ◆ Nieve (helado)
- ◆ Pasteles
- ◆ “Pies” de fruta
- ◆ Rosquillas
- ◆ Galletas
- ◆ Pan dulce
- ◆ Tocino, aceitunas
- ◆ Mantequilla, margarina
- ◆ Aceites, aderezos para ensaladas
- ◆ Mayonesa
- ◆ Pizza
- ◆ Spaghetti con carne
- ◆ Quesadillas
- ◆ Hamburguesas
- ◆ Hamburguesas con queso
- ◆ Enchiladas
- ◆ Tamales
- ◆ Leche de coco, Coco

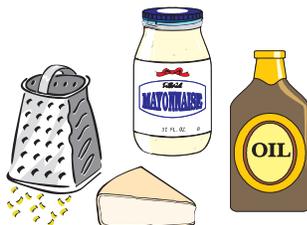


Estas comidas se pueden agregar a otras comidas fácilmente. Esto agrega calorías sin aumentar la cantidad de comida, lo cual es muy importante para niños con apetitos pequeños. Algunos niños pueden aumentar el peso que necesitan agregando cantidades pequeñas de comidas altas en grasa.

COMIDAS ALTAS EN GRASA

- ◆ Aceite de cocinar
- ◆ Mayonesa
- ◆ Cremas
- ◆ Aderezos para ensalada
- ◆ Aderezo
- ◆ Crema agría

- ◆ Mantequilla
- ◆ Margarina
- ◆ Queso crema



COMIDAS ALTAS EN CALORÍAS Y ALTAS EN NUTRICIÓN

- ◆ Leche en polvo
- ◆ “Breakfast Drink” instantaneo
- ◆ Ovaltine®
- ◆ Queso, salsa de queso
- ◆ Pasas y frutas secas
- ◆ Germen de trigo

SUPLEMENTOS COMPLETOS

Productos como:

- ◆ Pediasure®
- ◆ Kindercal®
- ◆ Resource for Kids®
- ◆ Ensure®
- ◆ Sustacal®/Boost®

