

Heart healthy eating to improve your nutrition

A patient's guide

Why do you need to eat well?

- If you have a small appetite, you may have lost weight or be at risk of losing weight and need extra nourishment.
- Eating too little may affect your energy levels.
- Eating a varied diet that includes high protein, high calorie food and drinks that are also heart healthy helps you to get all the nutrition that your body needs.
- This can help you regain weight, prevent any further weight loss, feel stronger, fight infections, improve wound healing and recover from illness more quickly.

Tips to help you maintain or gain weight

Maintaining a healthy weight is important. The following advice is suitable if you have heart problems or high cholesterol. It provides suggestions on how to make your diet as nutritious as possible with ideas to help you gain weight, prevent further weight loss and protect your heart.

Vegetable fats and oils are healthier choices than animal fats. Choose full fat olive oil spreads instead of butter and use vegetable oil (rapeseed) or olive oil for cooking.

Eat little and often

- Try having three smaller meals and two to three nourishing snacks in between, rather than three big meals.
- Make the most of times when you feel hungry. If this is in the morning try having a cooked breakfast.
- Large meals can be off-putting. Have a small portion to tempt your appetite and a second helping if you can manage it.
- If you do not feel you can manage pudding after a meal, have it an hour later.

- Try to include foods that are high in protein and calories at all mealtimes.
- Good sources of protein include meat and poultry (remove skin from chicken and any visible fat from meat), fish, eggs and dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and cheese. Plant-based sources of protein include soya, tofu, beans, pulses, nuts and seeds.
- Eat a serving of starchy food at each meal e.g. bread, cereals, potatoes, yam, plantain, pasta, chapati or rice.
- Eat some fruit and vegetables every day. Can be fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced.
- Use enriched whole milk and dairy products until your weight is within a healthy range, then consider switching to lower-fat choices.

Save drinks for the end of meals

- Try not to fill up on drinks during or shortly before meals.
- Choose nourishing drinks, e.g. fortified milk on its own or as milky coffee, hot chocolate, milkshake, malted milk drinks or 100% fruit juice.
- Avoid sugary or low-calorie drinks with little nutrition.
- Powdered supplements e.g. Complian™ or Meritene™ are available from most supermarkets and pharmacies and may be used in between meals.

Add heart healthy fats to meals and snacks

- Use olive oil, rapeseed oil, olive oil based spreads or ground nut oil and fry foods where possible. Brush oil over your portion before and during roasting and grilling. Use generous amounts on snacks.
- Add avocados to meals and snacks.

- Snack on unsalted nuts and seeds or use nut butters - spread generously on toast or added to sauces.
- Oily fish is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids. Examples of oily fish include mackerel, kippers, pilchards, trout, salmon, sardines or herrings. Aim to have a portion of oily fish at least once a week as part of a meal or a snack - can be tinned or frozen.
- Flaxseed oil (linseed oil) is a good vegetarian source of omega 3 and may be drizzled on pasta or used in dressings.

If you feel too tired to shop, cook or prepare meals

- Ask family, friends or your carer to help with cooking, shopping or ordering food for home delivery.
- Use meals on wheels services or home delivery services offering pre-prepared meals!
- Try to have company at mealtimes. Arrange to eat with friends or family or attend a local lunch club.
- Ready meals (frozen or tinned) are a good and easy to prepare option. Consider adding some fresh, frozen, preprepared or tinned vegetables to make a more nutritious meal.
- Convenience foods are a good standby to have in the cupboard, fridge or freezer e.g. tinned beans, fish, soup, puddings, fish in sauce, frozen, tinned or dried fruit.
- It may be a good idea to take a 'one a day' A-Z multivitamin and mineral supplement while you have a poor appetite.

Excite a small appetite

- Try to get some fresh air and gentle exercise before mealtimes. Please be guided by cardiac rehab exercise advice.
- If agreed by your doctor, a small

alcoholic drink before meals may improve your appetite.

- Take time to relax and enjoy your meals rather than rushing them.

Heart healthy nourishing snacks and food boosters

If you have a small appetite and have lost weight you may find the ideas below helpful to improve your nutritional intake. Make small additions of everyday nutrient dense ingredients to fortify meals, snacks and drinks in a heart healthy way without making portions too big to manage.

Try to eat two to three nourishing snacks between meals each day and initially aim to fortify one dish per meal.

Take a look at our handy guide on the next page.

Food boosters and nourishing snacks	Portion	Approx energy content (kcal)	Approx protein content (g)	Ideas to increase protein and calories
Unsalted nuts, e.g. almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, pistachios, walnuts	1 small handful (30g)	196	7	Have as a snack, add to salads, sprinkle on stir-fry, desserts, yoghurt, porridge
Nut butter, e.g. peanut butter, no added salt or sugar	1 tablespoon (15g)	91	4	Have as a snack with apple slices or banana, on toast, in a sandwich or stir in curry
Ground nuts, e.g. peanuts or almonds	1 tablespoon (15g)	90	3	Add into soups, stews, curries, sauces and porridge
Mixed seeds	1 heaped tablespoon (25g)	140	7	Add to cereal, porridge, salads and smoothies
Olive, rapeseed, groundnut (peanut) oil	1 tablespoon	120	0	Add while cooking, to salads, soups, sauces and vegetables
Heart healthy olive oil or rapeseed oil spread	2 teaspoons (10g)	105	0	Spread on toast, scones, malt loaf, crackers, add to mashed potatoes, vegetables. Use to make homemade cakes and flapjack
Greek style plain yoghurt full fat/fat free	150g pot	200/81	9/15	Spread on toast, scones, malt loaf, crackers, add to mashed potatoes, vegetables. Use to make homemade cakes and flapjack
Soya Greek style yoghurt	100g	52	6	Have with fruit, cereal, porridge or add to sauces
Plain coconut yoghurt	100g	125	1	Have with fruit, cereal, porridge or add to sauces

Food boosters and nourishing snacks	Portion	Approx energy content (kcal)	Approx protein content (g)	Ideas to increase protein and calories
Oat yoghurt	100g	84	2	Have with fruit, cereal, porridge or add to sauces
Avocado	Half	158	2	Have in sandwiches, on toast, with salad, blend in smoothies or dips
Dried skimmed milk powder	1 tablespoon (15g)	55	6	Enrich milk by mixing into 150mls (1/4 pint) of full cream milk and have with cereal, in milky drinks, use to make porridge, sauces, custard, rice puddings and soups
Cheddar cheese	Small matchbox size chunk (30g)	125	8	Have with crackers, grate on pasta, potatoes and vegetables
Tinned mackerel/sardine fillets in oil	1 tin drained	244	18	Have as a light meal on toast, in a sandwich, with crackers or with salad
Tinned tuna in sunflower oil	60g or ½ tin drained	88	14	Have as a light meal on toast, in a sandwich or with salad
Egg	1	72	7	Have boiled, scrambled, fried or poached as a snack on toast, add to salad, pasta, custard, milk puddings or mashed potato
Hummus	3 heaped tablespoons (50g)	113	4	Have with crackers, vegetable sticks, in a sandwich
Tinned ready to eat baked beans, lentils, kidney beans, mixed beans	½ tin (200g)	82	5	Have on toast as a light meal or add to soups, stews or casseroles or curries

Heart healthy nourishing recipes

Here are a few nourishing recipes for you to try at home. If you are vegan replace dairy ingredients with plant-based alternatives.

Pineapple yoghurt drink

Ingredients:

- 150ml whole milk
- 1 tablespoon milk powder
- 100g Greek yoghurt
- 1/3 can or 140g fresh pineapple rings
- 1 tablespoon honey*

Method:

Place all the ingredients in a blender or use a stick blender to liquidise to a smooth drink.

Approximately 428kcal, 15g protein per serving

Hot chocolate/malted drink

Ingredients:

- 150ml whole milk
- 2 tablespoon milk powder
- 4 teaspoon hot chocolate powder* or malted drink powder*

Method:

Mix the milk powder and hot chocolate powder with a small amount of the milk into a smooth paste. Add the rest of the milk and heat up in the microwave.

Approximately 308kcal, 13.5g protein per serving.

Banana and peanut butter smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter (or almond or cashew butter)
- 200ml whole milk
- 1 tablespoon skimmed milk powder

Method:

Liquidise all the ingredients and serve chilled.

Approximately 300kcal, 14g protein per serving

Basic vinaigrette

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon vinegar (try balsamic, cider, white or red wine vinegar)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
- Dried herbs to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method:

Place ingredients together in a lidded container, whisk or shake with the lid on to mix. Drizzle over salad, use as a marinade for meat or fish, use as a dip for fresh bread.

Approximately 370kcal, negligible protein per recipe

*Reduced sugar or sugar free alternatives may be used if you have diabetes.

Easy guacamole dip

Ingredients:

- 1 avocado
- 1 tablespoon lime
- 1 clove garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste

Optional additions: chopped tomato, chopped coriander, chilli flakes

Method:

Mash the avocado, add the rest of the ingredients plus any optional extras you would like.

Approximately 316kcal, 4 g protein per recipe

Salmon paté

Ingredients:

- 150g smoked salmon
- 6 tablespoon cream cheese (200g)
- 1 tablespoon creamed horseradish sauce (optional)
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest or 2 tbsp lemon juice
- Chives or dill
- Ground Black pepper to taste

Method:

Cut the smoked salmon into small pieces. Place all the rest of the ingredients into a bowl and mix until smooth. Add the salmon to the mixture and stir.

Alternatively for a smooth paté blend together. Enjoy with crackers, breadsticks or toast.

Approximately 650kcal, 35g protein per recipe

If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please discuss with your dietitian. If you have been advised to have thickened fluids or a modified diet by a speech and language therapist, please continue.

Useful contacts:

Royal Papworth Hospital dietitians: 01223 639372

Royal Papworth Hospital cardiac rehabilitation team: 01223 638 429

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners



Papworth Road
Cambridge Biomedical Campus
CB2 0AY



royalpapworth.nhs.uk



01223 638000

Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.

View a digital version of this leaflet by scanning the QR code.



Author ID:	Cardiac rehab dietitian and dietitian
Department:	Cardiac rehabilitation and nutrition and dietetics
Printed:	September 2023
Review date:	September 2025
Version:	1
Leaflet number:	PI 243