

Eating a diet high in calories and protein may be helpful if you have unintentionally lost weight, have a poor appetite, need to heal from a surgery or sickness, or fight off infections. It can also help highly physically active people who want to build strength and muscle to perform better. Here are some tips on adding calories and protein to your diet in a smart and healthful way:

## Helpful Hints for Adding Calories to the Diet

- . **Eat smaller meals more often:** Try to eat five to six smaller meals during the day rather than two or three large meals. This way you can increase your calories without being stuffed.
- . **Track your calories:** Implementing the aid of a food journal or a calorie counting app such as MyFitnessPal or MyPlate is an easy (and free) way to keep track of your daily calorie intake - with the bonus of having a comprehensive dietary analysis of the food you're taking in.
- . **Watch when you drink:** Some people find that drinking fluids before meals blunts their appetite. In that case, it may be better to sip higher calorie beverages (check the next tip) along with a meal or snack. For others, drinking 30 minutes after a meal, not with it, may work.
- . **Try smoothies and shakes:** Don't fill up on diet soda, coffee and other low calorie and low nutritional value drinks. Instead, drink smoothies or healthy shakes made with full-fat milk instead of water and fresh or frozen fruit. Sprinkle in some ground flaxseed, natural nut butter, or unsweetened coconut flakes for an extra boost of calories and nutrients.
- . **Choose higher calorie foods:** Avoid "lite," "low-calorie," and "low-fat" versions of foods and go for the full-fat or traditional options. Fat has more than twice as many calories as the same amount of protein or carbohydrates but try to stick with the heart-healthy ones. Good choices include nuts and natural nut butters, seeds, avocado, hummus olives, full fat plain Greek yogurt, milk, and cheese.
- . **Top it off:** Top your usual food with some concentrated calories, such as grated cheese on a cup of chili or soup. Spread natural peanut or almond butter on a whole-grain muffin. You can also garnish salads with healthy oils such as extra virgin olive oil, whole olives, avocados, nuts and sunflower seeds or add unsweetened raisins or dates to cereal for a snack.
- . **Add smart snacks:** Try to eat an energy and nutrient dense snack every two hours. Good options include nuts, natural peanut butter, cheese, dried fruit and avocados (i.e. guacamole paired with whole wheat crackers or tortilla chips). Having a bedtime snack is also a good strategy. Some choices may be a peanut butter and banana sandwich or a wrap sandwich with avocado, sliced vegetables, and lean meat or cheese.
- . **Add healthy fats to cooking:** Sauté or stir-fry meat, chicken or fish and vegetables in olive or avocado oil for additional heart healthy calories.

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Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Mayo Clinic, Today's Dietitian, American College of Sports and Medicine

## Helpful Hints for Adding Protein to the Diet

- . **Go for protein-rich options:** Healthy, protein-rich foods include plain Greek yogurt, nuts (almonds, pistachios, peanuts), seeds (squash and pumpkin seeds), edamame, lean turkey, chicken, beef, or pork, tuna, firm tofu, spirulina, cottage cheese, eggs, lentils, and black or lima beans. Protein supplements may be helpful to increase total protein intake for the day. If you need suggestions, ask your [amwell Registered Dietitian](#) for ideas!
- . **Boost your meals with powdered milk:** Pump up soups, casseroles, mashed potatoes and liquid milk with 1 to 2 tablespoons of dry milk powder to increase the protein content.
- . **Treat yourself:** Choose dessert recipes that contain eggs such as custard, bread pudding or rice pudding. These can help increase your protein (and calorie) intake.
- . **Sneak in different proteins:** Add cooked shrimp, tuna, crab meat, diced ham or sliced boiled eggs to sauces and serve over rice, cooked noodles, buttered toast or hot biscuits. You can also add diced or ground meat and grated cheese to soups and casseroles.
- . **Have a protein shake for breakfast or snack:** Many smoothies are loaded with carbohydrates but have very little protein. Protein powders make it easy to create a high-protein shake. There are several types on the market, including whey, soy, egg and pea protein. If protein powders are not your jam, try increasing protein intake with Greek plain yogurt or nut milks with more than 10g of protein per serving (pea protein). To boost the calorie/protein content even more, add nut butters, frozen avocado chunks, flaxseeds or chia seeds.
- . **Choose leaner, slightly larger cuts of meat:** Choosing leaner options of meat and increasing portion sizes can significantly boost the protein content of your meal. For example, a ribeye steak has 18g of protein and 274 calories per 100 g (3.5oz.) while a top sirloin steak, which is a leaner cut, offers 24g of protein and 225 calories per 112 g (4oz.).
- . **Sprinkle some nutritional yeast:** A good alternative to cheese, nutritional yeast (also called "nooch") packs 6g of protein per serving, compared to about 2g of protein in parmesan cheese. You can use it to top salads, popcorn and other snacks where you'd like a cheesy yet protein-filled boost.
- . **Swap your regular bread for high protein versions:** All breads are not alike. Some breads made from whole grains and nuts may be packed with fiber and protein. Here are some good examples: P28 high protein bread (14g of protein per slice), Dave's Killer bread (the protein content of their bagels ranges from 11g to 13g per serving), Nature's Own Life Wheat + Protein bread (8g of protein per slice), Arnold Whole Grains Healthy Multi-Grain bread (5g of protein per slice), Outer Aisle Plantpower Sandwich Thins (4g of protein per slice), and Ezekiel Sprouted Grain bread (4g of protein per slice).

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