

FACTSHEET

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High Energy Eating for Infants 6-12 months –

Tips for gaining weight

Infants can be underweight for many reasons. Others may be at risk of losing too much weight. This resource provides information for a high energy eating plan for infants who have difficulty gaining weight. This information should be used by the parents or carers of infants who require this diet plan to gain weight and should be used under the guidance of a qualified dietitian or Doctor. If you are concerned about your child's growth, you should speak to your GP, Paediatrician or Early Childhood Nurse. A dietitian can provide advice on nutrition and feeding your child.

This information, with its food examples, is intended for educational purposes only and does not constitute SCHN/JHCH endorsement of any particular branded food product.

A healthy diet containing plenty of energy (kilojoules/calories) and enough nutrients (protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals) is important for all infants. However, some infants need added energy and protein to assist with their weight gain and growth. One of the simplest ways to do this is to increase energy and protein in the foods your infant eats.

The table below provides some suggestions for increasing the energy and/or protein content of your child's diet:

| Food/fluid | Uses to boost energy and protein |
|---|--|
| Breast milk/formula = energy & protein | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This should remain your babies main drink until at least 12 months of age• Use to make rice cereal or add to foods (avoid adding water or other milks)• Your dietitian may give you a special recipe for adding energy (kilojoule/calories) to feeds |
| Oil (preferably olive or canola) = high energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use in cooking whenever you can e.g. use for frying meats• Puree into vegetables or mix into commercial baby foods• Add into iron fortified baby rice cereal• Drizzle over the top of meat, rice, noodles, pasta and cooked vegetables |
| Margarine = high energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As above with oil; plus• Spread thickly on sandwiches, toast, crackers and biscuits |
| Meat and alternatives = high protein | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fry with oil or add oil to pureed meats e.g. beef, chicken, lamb, pork and fish• Try making meatballs or patties using beef mince, chicken mince or cooked fish |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baked beans, eggs, lentils and legumes are meat alternatives. To boost the energy content add margarine, grated cheese, mayonnaise or oil. Use high fat sauces to flavour e.g. creamy mushroom sauce |
| Egg = high protein | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to dip toast "soldiers" into egg yolk Make high energy scrambled eggs or omelettes using cream, cheese, oil. Add ham or bacon if desired. Mini quiches, zucchini slice, boiled eggs are good soft finger foods Use to make French toast |
| Dairy products = high protein | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full fat dairy products are recommended for children under the age of 2 years Examples include milk, yoghurt, cheese, cream cheese, custard, ice cream, sour cream Include dairy-based snacks regularly through the day e.g. yoghurt/custard with mashed banana/fruit pieces to dip, use cream cheese as a dip or spread on crackers/sandwiches, cheese cubes or cheese sticks Plain Greek yoghurt can be mixed into many foods after cooking |
| Cheese = high protein | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grate into pureed vegetables, pasta, rice, bolognese sauce, casseroles Melt into baked beans or tinned spaghetti on toast Add cream cheese to crackers, mix into vegies Try grated, cheese slices or cheese sticks for finger foods |
| Cream/sour cream = high energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add to fruit or vegetable purees, or mashed potato Dollop onto the top of boiled potato Add to soups or casseroles Mix cream into cereals e.g. Weetbix, porridge or into yoghurts and custards |
| Avocado / hummus (move this section to above the nut butters) = high energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mash and add to purees and vegetables Use as a spread on sandwiches, toast and crackers Mash with sour cream and use as a dip with vegetables or crackers |
| Nut spreads = high protein, high energy | <p>** Note whole nuts are a choking hazard for children under 3 years **</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use smooth peanut butter or other nut spreads on sandwiches, toast, biscuits, crackers Add nut butters to cereal and porridge Use hummus as a spread or dip |
| Carbohydrate Supplements = high carbohydrate, high energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples include Carb Plus and Polyjoule Ask you dietitian or doctor if these supplements are suitable for your child Always follow the directions of your dietitian or Doctor when using these products |

How much to use?

The amount of energy and/or protein needed will depend on the weight gain required. Please discuss your infants requirements with a dietitian and if a booster is suitable for your child. The following is a guide only.

| | Foods | Energy/Protein Boosters |
|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Puree foods | 2 Tbs puree/mashed vegetables | 1-2 teaspoons margarine/oil |
| Soft foods | ½ cup baked bean/spaghetti | 1-2 Tablespoons grated cheese |
| | ½ cup cereal | 2-4 teaspoons cream |
| | ½ cup cooked noodles/pasta | 2-4 teaspoons margarine/oil |
| | ½ cup cooked rice and vegetables | 2-4 teaspoons margarine/oil |

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| Finger foods | Cooked vegetable pieces | Dip in cream cheese/ avocado/ hummus/natural yoghurt/sour cream or melt cheese over the top. Use thickly spread margarine and add cheese/ avocado/ nut spread |
| | Sandwich Meat | Cook in oil and add extra cheese/ creamy sauce/ crumb coating then cut into pieces or sticks |

Recipe Ideas

High energy mash – mash potato/pumpkin/sweet potato with cream, butter, sour cream and melt cheese over the top.

Risotto - toss rice in oil, then slowly add water/stock/milk, stirring constantly until rice is soft. Add chicken, peas, cream and sliced mushrooms. Mix in additional oil/margarine/butter before serving.

Fruit Crumble – mix 1-2 teaspoons sugar into 1 tablespoon of margarine/butter, then mix in ½ cup flour or minute oats and sprinkle on top of stewed fruit. Oven bake until golden on top. Serve with cream or ice-cream.

Creamy Rice Pudding - simmer rice in milk, stirring constantly, until soft. Add sugar & coconut cream to taste.

Pastry Cheese Straws - sprinkle grated cheese on a sheet of puff pastry. Cut into strips, twist and bake in hot oven until golden.

Mini Meatballs – Mix mince (beef/lamb/pork or chicken) with a beaten egg to hold it together – roll into little balls & fry in oil until browned. Transfer to baking dish, cover with sauce (optional) and bake till cooked through. Ideas include:

- Chicken mince with mashed sweet potato.
- Pork mince with grated apple
- Lamb mince with grated cheese
- Beef mince with grated zucchini, carrot & tomato based pasta sauce.

Crumbed chicken – Lightly beat 1 egg and 2 tablespoons cream, dip chicken pieces into this mixture, then coat in bread crumbs. Fry in olive oil until golden brown.

Couscous - soak couscous in boiling water. Add grated cheese and margarine/butter. Serve with chicken, meat or fish and vegetables. Another idea is to mash pumpkin through the couscous to help it stick together. Form into little balls to make a tasty finger food for your toddler.

French toast: soak bread in a lightly beaten egg, fry in margarine or oil until golden brown, and then cut into fingers.

This high energy eating plan should not be routinely used for other family members and should be stopped if the child no longer needs to gain weight.

If your child does not gain weight on the high energy eating plan, further medical advice and investigation may be required. Please consult with your dietitian or doctor.