

## Gaining Weight: A Healthy Plan for Adding Pounds

Winning at weight gain comes down to pairing a balanced eating pattern with regular physical activity - like any healthy lifestyle. While many overweight people find it difficult to shed extra pounds, those who are underweight face their own challenges trying to keep each pound and add more. The good news for those trying to gain weight is that adding pounds can be simplified by following these healthy and practical tips.

### Plan ahead for extra meals and snacks

The key to gaining weight is shifting the body weight equation so that you take in more calories than you burn. To gain weight, it is important **to eat more food every day, consistently, day after day**. Instead of the traditional "three squares a day," Have a plan to:

- Add two or three substantial snacks between three moderate-size meals.
- Spread your food out during the day so that you are more likely to enjoy your meals and snacks without feeling overstuffed.

### Concentrate on calories

Promote weight gain by choosing foods that are "calorie-dense," or high in calories. While rich desserts and fried foods quickly come to mind, the emphasis should be on foods that pack other nutrients, such as protein, vitamins, and minerals, in addition to calories.

### Where can you start?

Begin by choosing higher calorie foods from each food group shown below. Here are some ideas for nutritious food choices:

- Grains/starches: **granola, bagels, biscuits, tortillas, cornbread, potatoes, pasta, rice, quinoa.**
- Fruits: **canned fruit in syrup, dried fruits, fruit nectars.**
- Vegetables: **avocado, olives, potatoes, peas, corn, squash.**
- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts: **beef, pork, lamb, poultry, salmon, swordfish, omelets, nuts, peanut butter, beans (black, kidney, pinto, chickpeas, refried beans, etc.), Trail mix with nuts.**

- Dairy or dairy substitutes: **2% or full fat milk (cow, soy, rice, almond), fruited yogurts, hard cheeses, Cottage cheese, ice cream, puddings, custards, milkshakes.**

- Fats, oils, and sweets: **butter, margarine, sour cream, cream cheese, gravy, salad dressings, jellies, jams, honey, and candies** (in moderation?) to add pleasure and calories to your other foods. These foods provide a lot of calories in small amounts.

## Ways to Maximize each bite

Incorporating extra calories into everyday meals can make eating a creative and flavorful experience. In addition to using fats and oils (above), try adding these nutritious, calorie-packed combinations to your meals:

- Use milk in place of water in hot cereal, soups, and sauces. Sprinkle powdered milk into casseroles and meatloaf for added calories, protein, and calcium.

- Add avocado, cheese, and salad dressings to sandwiches.

- Mix nuts, beans, cheese, cooked chopped meat, wheat germ, or ground flaxseed into casseroles, side dishes, and pasta.

- Choose calorie-dense beverages, appetizers, soup, salads, entrees, and desserts when dining out. Take home leftovers for a snack.

## Let snacks work in your favor

Smart snacking plays an important role in gaining weight. Choose snacks that add calories, vitamins, and minerals:

- Add powdered milk to a yogurt or ice cream-based shake with fruit and fruit juice

- Dip crackers, chips, and fresh vegetable relishes into high-calorie dips made with cheese, sour cream (either regular or reduced-fat), mashed beans, or fat-free salad dressings

- Space out snacks during the day so you don't spoil your appetite for later meals.

*Adapted and used with permission from the [American Dietetic Association](#).*