

Increasing energy in children's diet

Infants and young children need enough energy, protein, and nutrients to grow. Sometimes children have difficulties gaining weight because of illnesses, decreased appetite or loss of interest. In that case children might eat less and not fulfil their energy or nutritional needs. By choosing energy dense foods we can help them to fulfil their needs.

Examples of energy dense foods for infants and children:

- Avocado
- Full fat dairy products (i.e. Greek yoghurt and cream)
- Nut – and almond butter
- Meat and fatty fish (i.e. salmon)
- Oils, unsalted butter, spreaded cheese
- Hummus
- Minced nuts and seeds
- Dried fruits (i.e. raisins)
- Cheese
- Beans and lentils

The simplest way to increase energy in children's diet is adding energy to the food they already eat. Here are some ways you can add energy to meals:

1. Stir yoghurt/cream/cheese into gravy/sauce
2. Add minced seeds or nut butter into porridge
3. Spread butter/cheese/pate on both sides of the bread
4. Fry bread/rice with egg and oil
5. Add oil to gravy or pasta/rice
6. Offer a dip with vegetables/fruits/potatoes – i.e. yoghurt, nut butter, hummus or pesto
7. Add lentils (+oil) to tomato sauce (i.e. into lasagna)
8. Add cheese/yoghurt/milk/cream to mashed potatoes (even beans as well)
9. Offer a smoothie/boost with meals – add yoghurt/nut butter/oats
10. Add chopped dried fruits to porridge

Tips about mealtimes and environment

- Offer a child at least 5-6 meals a day and have a good routine
- Mealtimes should not take more than 20-30 minutes
- Offer a child food first and then drinks
- Offer a small amount of water with meals but consider the amount as it can take room in the stomach from other foods
- Don't pressure or force a child to eat
- Limit other stimuli during mealtimes, from i.e. TV and smartphones, have mealtimes as relaxed as possible