

High calorie, high protein diet for toddlers and preschoolers



How can I help my child eat more?

Try finger foods

- Young children (toddlers and preschoolers) may like finger foods because they are easy to eat, and they may not need your help.
- Some finger foods are:
 - Fish sticks
 - Cheese cubes
 - Peas
 - Beans
 - Pasta
 - Cut-up fruits and vegetables

Let your child help make meals

- Help them pour cereal into a bowl, set the table, or wash vegetables.
- Your child will be much more likely to try foods they help make.

Offer many small meals and snacks

- Give your child 4 to 5 small meals each day on a schedule.
- Space meals 2 to 3 hours apart.
- Offer a snack before bed.
- Do not force your child to eat more. They get full faster than you. The size of their stomach is very small, so they cannot eat a large amount of food at one time.

Offer drinks with meals and snacks

- Offer whole milk with meals.
- Offer water or other drinks with snacks.
- Limit fruit juice and sweetened drinks to 4 to 6 ounces (oz) each day.

Keep mealtime quiet

- Young children get easily distracted during mealtime. Try to make mealtime quiet, so your child can focus on eating.
- Turn off the TV and screens during meals.

What foods should I offer my child to help them gain weight?

- Read labels on foods. Choose and offer foods that have the most calories, fat and protein.
- Meat, milk, cheese, eggs and bread are higher in calories than fruits and vegetables.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

High calorie, high protein diet for toddlers and preschoolers, continued

- Dried fruits are higher in calories than fresh fruit. Offer raisins, dried apples or dried bananas when your child wants fruit.
- Fruit nectar, avocado and canned fruit in heavy syrup are also high in calories.
- Use regular dairy items (instead of low fat). Use whole milk and whole milk yogurt or Greek yogurt.
- Offer cream soups. They have more calories and protein than clear soups.
- Offer cornbread, muffins, pancakes, granola, granola bars or high fat crackers.
- Nut butters and seed butters are high calorie choices for children who do not have eczema or food allergies. These include almond butter and sunflower seed butter.
- **Avoid** giving:
 - Calorie free drinks.
 - Fat free or low fat products.

How can I add calories and proteins to foods my child eats?

- Add margarine, butter or vegetable oil to grits, cream soups, oatmeal, meats and cooked vegetables. This can add as much as 45 calories per teaspoon (tsp).
- Sauté or fry foods in canola or other vegetable oil.
- Use half and half in place of milk or water.
- Mix 1 tablespoon (tbsp) of non-fat dry skim milk powder into grits, oatmeal, gravies, soups and sauces.
- Sprinkle grated cheese on potatoes, hot cereals or on top of soups. Melt cheese in meats, vegetables, pasta and rice.
- Use dried beans and tofu as meat substitutes.
- Add cooked eggs to:
 - Hot cereals (such as grits or oatmeal)
 - Soups and salads
 - Vegetables
 - Casseroles
- Add these to your child's food:
 - Small amount of heavy cream
 - Half and half
 - Mayonnaise
 - Sour cream
 - Whipped cream
 - Grated cheese
 - Cheese sauce
 - Gravy
- Dip fruits, vegetables and chips in:
 - Ranch dressing
 - Caramel spread

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High calorie, high protein diet for toddlers and preschoolers, continued

- Flavored cream cheese
- Hummus
- Guacamole
- Spread nut butter or seed butter on bread, toast, crackers and soft fruits like bananas (for children who do not have eczema or food allergies).
- Add whipping cream to desserts.
- Add brown sugar, honey or maple syrup to hot or cold cereals, drinks or desserts.
- Use ice cream to make:
 - Milkshakes
 - Sundaes
 - Banana splits
 - Ice cream sandwiches (put ice cream in between cookies or graham crackers)
- Make double strength milk:
 - **Recipe:** Add 2 tablespoons (tbsp) of non-fat dry skim milk powder to 1 cup whole milk.
 - Use this to make hot cereals, cold cereals, mashed potatoes, gravies, scrambled eggs, cream soups or pudding, or for your child to drink.

What do I need to know about oral nutrition supplements?

Talk with your child’s nutritionist. Some choices are listed below.

Offer high calorie supplement drinks, such as PediaSure or Boost Kid Essentials.

- You can buy PediaSure at most grocery stores.
- You can order Boost Kid Essentials through most pharmacies.

You may be able to get these through WIC if your child is younger than 5 years old. Talk with your child’s care team for more details.

Try to have your child drink _____ cups or cans each day.



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Add powdered instant breakfast to whole milk. If your child needs to avoid milk, ask about:

- Bright Beginning Soy Pediatric Drink
- Pea protein kids shakes, such as Orgain or Kate Farms

You can make your own high calorie shake or smoothie with:

- Whole milk yogurt
- Protein powder
- Avocado
- Ground flax
- Nut butters

How much weight should my child gain?

Your child should gain about _____ pounds each month.

Who should I call if I have questions?

Call your child's doctor or nutritionist if you have questions about a high calorie, high protein diet.

Where can I learn more?

These books by Ellyn Satter may be helpful:

- Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense
- How to Get Your Kid to Eat...But Not Too Much

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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