

Adding Calories and Protein to Your Child's Diet

When children are not growing well, eating more calories and protein may help. Read on to learn how to add more calories and protein to your child's diet.

Offer healthy, higher calorie and protein foods

The amount your child eats may depend on how fast they are growing, how active they are, or how they are feeling. Match the texture of foods to your child's age and feeding skills.

Vegetables and fruits

- cooked vegetables with cream or cheese sauce, or grated cheese
- fruit with yogurt, cottage cheese, or pudding
- raw vegetables with bean or yogurt dip
- potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, or turnips mashed with milk and soft margarine or butter
- avocado as a spread, in smoothies, or as a dip
- dried fruit, like apples, cranberries, or raisins



Grain foods

- bread, crackers, muffins, bagels, bannock, naan, pita, or roti with cheese, cream cheese, hummus, peanut or nut butter, or jam
- pancakes, waffles, or French toast made with extra eggs, oil, or skim milk powder. Serve with syrup, fruit, yogurt, or whipped cream.
- pasta, barley, or quinoa with sauce or cheese
- hot or cold cereals with milk, nuts, and fruit
- rice or congee with bean curd, egg, or tofu
- granola or muesli with yogurt and fruit
- wheat germ added to baked goods, sprinkled on yogurt, or used in place of breadcrumbs



Protein foods

Milk, yogurt, cheese, and soy beverage

Choose milk, yogurt, and cheese with a higher % M.F. (milk fat) on the package.

- 3.25% (homogenized) milk or *High Calorie, High Protein Milk*. Offer as a drink and use it in place of milk in recipes.
- cream soups or sauces made with *High Calorie, High Protein Milk*
- cheese (28% M.F. or higher) – all types including cheddar, feta, paneer, and Swiss – sliced or grated onto foods, or made into cheese sauce
- skim milk powder added to cream soups, potatoes, hot cereals, smoothies, puddings, and casseroles
- yogurt or cottage cheese (2.5% M.F. or higher) as a dip, mixed with fruit, or added to a smoothie
- fortified soy beverage, used in place of milk as a drink or in recipes. Other plant-based beverages, like those made from almond or coconut are often much lower in calories and protein. **If you have questions about the best choice for your child, ask your dietitian, doctor, or public health nurse.**



High Calorie, High Protein Milk

1 cup	3.25% milk	250 mL
2 Tbsp	10% cream	30 mL
2 Tbsp	skim milk powder	30 mL

Mix ingredients until skim milk powder is dissolved. Makes about 1 ¼ cups (300 mL).

Super Pudding

3 ½ oz	instant pudding mix	100 g
	(makes 4 servings)	
2 cups	evaporated milk	500 mL
2 Tbsp	vegetable oil	30 mL
2 Tbsp	skim milk powder	30 mL

Mix ingredients in a bowl. Cover and put in the fridge until set. Makes 4–½ cup (125 mL) servings.

Beans, lentils, meat, fish, eggs, nuts, and seeds

- beef, bison, goat, lamb, pork, or wild game with sauce or gravy
- chicken thighs or drumsticks
- cooked peas, beans and lentils in dips, sauces, soups, or casseroles
- eggs fried in oil, soft margarine or butter, or scrambled with cheese
- chicken, beef, tuna, ham, or egg casseroles, sandwiches and salads
- fatty fish (like salmon, sardines, tuna packed in oil, or trout)
- hummus with naan or pita
- nuts, peanuts, or seeds offered as snacks, added to salads or casseroles
- peanut butter, nut butter or tahini (sesame seed butter) spread on bread, crackers, muffins, bananas, apple slices, or celery sticks, or added to smoothies, sauces, soups, or muffins
- pieces of meat, poultry, fish, or tofu coated with bread crumbs and baked
- whole eggs used in recipes for casseroles, hamburgers, pancakes, and custards



Add fat, sauces, and dips to food

- Add vegetable oil, soft margarine, or butter to cooked pasta, potatoes, rice, and vegetables.
- Mix mayonnaise with boiled eggs, chicken, or canned fish to make a sandwich filling.
- Spread cream cheese, soft margarine, or butter on bread, muffins, and loaves.
- Use salad dressing or mayonnaise as a dip.
- Add gravy or other sauce (such as curry or sweet and sour sauce) to food.



Support healthy mealtime habits while adding calories and protein

- **Enjoy eating together as a family.** Sometimes your child may refuse meals or snacks. Don't pressure a child to eat. Don't bribe, beg, or "make" your child eat certain kinds or amounts of food. Pressuring children to eat can make them eat less.
- **At family meals, serve your child the same food as everyone else, but with extra calories and protein added.** Add extra fat, sauces and dips to your child's food before you bring it to the table.
- **Use meals eaten away from the rest of the family, like school lunches, as a chance to offer special higher calorie and protein foods to your child.**
- **Offer food every 2–3 hours at planned times.** Letting your child eat or drink between planned meals and snacks can make your child less hungry when it is time for meals.
- **Start by offering small portions. Offer more if your child is still hungry.** Keep in mind that children have small stomachs. They may not eat a lot at one time.
- **Limit foods and drinks labelled "light", "low fat", "fat-free", "low calorie", or "sugar-free".**
- **Avoid letting your child fill up on fluids.** Drinking too many fluids like milk and juice may make a child less hungry for meals and snacks. Serve no more than 2–3 cups (500–750 mL) of milk each day. **Limit juice to ½ cup (125 mL)** each day. Offer water in between meals and snacks.
- **Limit less healthy foods.** Foods like sugary drinks, candies, potato chips, and donuts don't help children grow well.
- **Be a role model.** Children are quick to learn what foods parents do and don't like. If you eat healthy and try new foods, your child will be more likely to do the same.

Add calories and protein in a smoothie

Smoothies are an easy way to boost nutrition and calories. Choose one or more item from each column. Combine and blend until smooth. Use more liquid for a thinner drink. Use frozen fruit to make a thicker drink.



Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit ½ cup (125 mL)	+ Liquid ½ cup (125 mL)	+ Calorie booster	+ Protein booster
Apple	Milk	Avocado (½)	Chia, flax, hemp, sesame, or sunflower seeds (2 Tbsp/ 30 mL)
Banana	Buttermilk	Canned coconut milk or cream (¼ cup/ 60 mL)	Cooked lentils or white beans (¼ cup/ 60 mL)
Blueberries	Evaporated milk	Cream, 5% M.F. or higher (¼ cup/ 60 mL)	Cottage cheese (¼ cup/ 60 mL)
Kiwi	Fortified soy beverage	Frozen yogurt or ice cream (½ cup/ 125 mL)	Peanut, nut, or seed butter (2 Tbsp/ 30 mL)
Mango	Kefir	Oats (⅓ cup/ 75 mL)	Ricotta cheese (¼ cup/ 60 mL)
Melon	Nutrition supplement drink	Wheat germ (2 Tbsp/ 30 mL)	Silken tofu (½ cup/ 125 mL)
Nectarine	Yogurt		Skim milk powder (¼ cup/ 60 mL)
Peach	100% vegetable or fruit juice		
Pear			
Pineapple			
Raspberries			
Strawberries			
Optional - These add very little calories and protein.			Tip: Freeze extra smoothie in popsicle molds or paper cups with popsicle sticks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orange, lemon, or lime zest • Extracts like vanilla, lemon, or almond • Spices, like cinnamon, ginger, or nutmeg • Vegetables, such as spinach, carrots, and kale 			

Nutrition supplement drinks

- Nutrition supplement drinks have extra calories and protein to help promote healthy growth. There are special types made for children.
- Your child's doctor or dietitian will tell you if your child needs nutrition supplement drinks. They will also tell you what kind and how much your child needs.

Protein powders

- Most children can get enough protein from food.
- Your child's doctor or dietitian will tell you if your child needs protein powder. They will also tell you what kind and how much your child needs.
- Most protein powders are not designed for children and may have too much protein.

Notes
