



Gaining weight safely

If you have lost weight as a result of your bowel cancer – or your treatment – then there are safe, effective ways to increase the nutrient and energy levels in your diet so that you can rebuild your muscles and replenish lost body fat without compromising your health and wellbeing.

To gain weight safely and protect your health you need to

- » Eat more calories every day from a wide range of healthy foods

AND

- » Choose the right types of physical activity to help you build up your muscle strength and stamina again


Increasing calories will help you to gain weight. Gaining weight can help you to feel stronger, feel less tired and be less vulnerable to infections. It can also have the added benefit of helping to lift your mood.

Should I be concerned about eating too much fat?

Fats and oils are concentrated sources of energy. When your appetite is small, it can help to increase your weight as part of a varied, balanced diet.

Adding healthy fats to your diet is important for growth and repair, and for fighting inflammation in your body. These are found in oily fish like mackerel, salmon, herring and sardines. They are also found in some plants and fruits and in many raw nuts and seeds.

tip



If you can tolerate them, nuts and seeds are a better source of healthy fats than crisps or biscuits.

Foods that contain large amounts of solid animal fats can be *unhelpful* in your diet. These are often found in rich processed foods or very refined foods. These can add calories but they can also cause increased risks for some health problems. These unhealthy fats can be found in fattier cuts of red meat and pork including processed lunch meats, burgers and sausages. They can also be found in many sweet, baked goods (as butter) and in some rich ice creams and creamy desserts.

tips

Tips to add extra calories to your diet:

- 1** Try to have something to eat and drink **within an hour of getting out of bed** in the morning
- 2** Introduce **three to four regular small snacks and/or extra nutritional drinks** into your daily routine
- 3** **Carry tasty snacks and a drink with you** if you are out and about during the day. Mixed nuts and seed mixtures, bananas, fruity malt loaf, or oat based muesli bars provide protein, energy and fibre and are easy to store and to eat when you are on the go
- 4** Also **snack on crackers, oatcakes, wholegrain biscuits, cereal bars, bread and toast**



tips

- 5** **Include one portion of protein with every meal.** Choose from meat or vegetarian proteins, oily fish, and dairy products including milk, cheese, yoghurt, eggs, tofu, beans, peas, lentils and nuts
- 6** **Include at least one portion of carbohydrate at each meal too.** The best sources are potatoes, pasta, rice, noodles, bread, barley, and also beans and lentils. If you can tolerate it, try the wholegrain varieties
- 7** **Include 1-2 portions of different salads and/or vegetables** with an olive oil dressing with each main meal for vitamins and minerals
- 8** Add 2-3 portions of **fresh fruit as extra snacks** during the day to provide a good mix of essential vitamins and minerals, and extra fibre. Fruit juice and dried fruits also count





tips



- 9** Add an extra knob of butter or spoonful of olive, seed or nut oil onto bread, vegetables, or salads
- 10** Try **adding avocado** to salads and sandwiches, or mash them on toast or oatcakes as a tasty, healthy snack
- 11** Grate or slice **cheeses** for sandwiches or garnishes in salads, soups, casseroles and on garlic bread or toast
- 12** **Creamy salad dressings and mayonnaise** can also help to boost the energy content of food in small portions
- 13** **Coconut milk and cream** are very helpful for healthy weight gain. Add them to soups, stews and curries, or into desserts and ice creams

Note: *butter, cream, and coconut oil are high in saturated fat. Choose olive, vegetable and sunflower oil and fresh or tins of oily fish as a healthier alternative if you can.*

Which foods should you avoid?

A simple rule is everything in moderation. Sugar dense, high fat foods can be enjoyed only as an occasional treat. If you need to gain weight then you might still want to allow yourself treats unless you have a medical reason. Refined sugar and saturated fats have been linked to increased risk of diabetes and heart problems.



tip

Making each meal more of an occasion can help to regain the pleasure of eating. Take your time and eat in the company of others when you can. This can help you to relax and encourage you to eat more.

If you are a smoker, this can also reduce your appetite and prevent you eating a full, balanced diet.



020 7940 1760 | feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk
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