

NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS TO GROW ON

What You Need to Know

High Calorie Nutrition for Your Child

Children need good nutrition to learn, develop, and grow to be healthy. At each of your child's checkups, your healthcare provider should plot their measurements on a growth chart. On the chart, you should see a continuous curve at every visit when growth is good. When children don't get enough calories, their growth curve might become slow or fall. Poor growth can put children at risk of being underweight.

What counts as underweight?

- For 0-24-months olds, health care providers use a World Health Organization (WHO) growth chart.
 - Underweight is when your child's weight-for-age is plotted below the growth chart (less than the 2nd percentile) and/or weight-for-length is plotted below the growth chart (less than the 2nd percentile).
- For 2-18-year-olds health care providers use Centers for Disease Control (CDC) growth charts.
 - Underweight is when your child's weight-for-age is plotted below the growth chart (less than 5th percentile) and/or Body Mass Index (BMI) is plotted below the growth chart (less than 5th percentile).

*Talk to your health care provider if you think your child is underweight.

If your child is underweight, it is best to encourage weight gain in a healthy way. Make every bit count by offering meals and snacks that are nutrient rich and high in calories. Boosting your child's calories can be challenging so here are some tips.

Meal Planning Tips

- Provide regular meals and snacks spaced 2-3 hours apart. Limit grazing on food all day.
- Limit juice to 4oz per day. Instead, offer water between meals in a cup.
- Avoid sugary beverages like sweet tea, soda, or fruit flavored drinks.
- Offer milk or formula at the end of a meal or snack.
- Enjoy a relaxing mealtime with the family without distractions (no TV, tablets, or phones).
- If your child refuses to eat, wait a few minutes and try again. Never force your child to eat.

Ways to Increase Calories

Grains

- Add whole fat milk to cooked cereals and add a topping like nut butter, fruit, and/or butter.
- Add cream sauces, cheese, oils or butter to pasta and rice.
- Offer French Toast, pancakes, or waffles with fruit, real whipped cream, nut butters, and/or butter.
- When offering bagels, English Muffins, toast, or croissants add high calorie topping like cream cheese, butter, nut butters, avocado spread, cheese, or eggs.
- Pair crackers with soft fruit or cheese.
- Make muffins with fruit or nut butters.
- Add butter and/or cheese to grits or cornbread.

Fruit/Vegetables

- Any fruit is recommended. Try fruit with whole fat yogurt, homemade puddings, or real whipped cream.
- Vegetables are low in calories so add cheese, gravy, cream sauces, or oils/butter.
- Serve mashed/baked potatoes with cheese, sour cream, and/or cooked broccoli.
- Offer sweet potatoes mashed or as fries with oil or butter.
- Add soft-cooked peas to dishes.
- Add avocado to meat, beans, eggs, and pasta/rice.

Dairy

- Offer whole fat milk, whole fat yogurt, and 4% cottage cheese. Avoid low fat varieties.
- Put melted cheese on vegetables, rice/pasta, toast/sandwiches, grits, soups, and casseroles.
- Make puddings with whole fat milk and add soft fruit like bananas and berries.
- Try homemade smoothies by adding fruit, flax/chia seeds, whole fat yogurt, and nut butter.
*If your child cannot have dairy, discuss other options with your pediatrician.

Protein

- Add small soft shredded pieces of cooked meat, fish, chicken, turkey, eggs, beans or tofu to pasta, rice, soups, stews, chili, and casseroles.
- Mix boiled egg, tuna, or chicken with mayo and spread on bread or crackers.
- Offer beans with sour cream, cheese, salsa, guacamole in rice or soft tortilla.
- Spread hummus on pitas, crackers, or sandwiches.
- Add nut butter to bread, crackers, cooked cereals, muffins, or smoothies.

What is a Complete Pediatric Formula?

A complete pediatric formula is a balanced liquid drink of calories, protein, fat, and added vitamins/minerals to help children gain weight. Some examples include PediaSure or Boost Kids Essentials but there are many more brands.

- Only for children 1 year and older. Not for babies.
- Is not a toddler formula. A complete pediatric formula has more calories and protein.
- Is not a meal replacement. Continue to give regular meals and snacks to your child.
- Offer the pediatric formula after a meal. Do not give before a meal because it fills up tummies quickly.
- Offer only in a cup not a bottle. These products do contain sugar so brush your child's teeth after they drink them.
- Can be made from milk, soy, or peas. Some formulas are hypo-allergenic meaning they are made for kids with allergies.
- Can be chocolate, vanilla, strawberry or other fruit flavors.
- Some you can buy over the counter and others you must order from your pharmacy.

***Discuss with your doctor if you think your child needs a Complete Pediatric Formula**

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