

Nutrition for Healthy Weight Gain

Although we often hear about the obesity epidemic and the health problems associated with being overweight, there are also those who are underweight and may benefit from gaining weight. If you are one of those people and are looking to gain weight to improve your health, improve your athletic performance or just to look and feel better, it is important to do so in a smart and heart-healthy way. Here are some tips:

- Concentrate your calories- to increase your calorie intake, rather than adding more food to your plate, try sneaking calories into the foods you are already eating such as topping your salad with sunflower seeds, adding a slice of cheese to your sandwich, preparing oatmeal or soup with milk instead of water, or adding dry milk powder to casseroles.
- Avoid empty calories- boosting your calorie intake is essential to gaining weight however it is important to choose your calories wisely. Aim for well-balanced meals and snacks that include plenty of servings from each of the food groups: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy foods, and lean proteins. Although all foods can fit into a healthy diet, limit empty calorie foods such as chips and candy as they lack important nutrients.
- Think about your drink- in addition to boosting calories, beverages can help to keep you hydrated. Choose nutrient-rich beverages such as milk or 100% fruit juice. If you have a small appetite, limit fluids during meals and instead drink in between meals to leave more room for your food at mealtimes.
- Fuel up frequently- Make sure to eat something every few hours. You can try three meals and 2- 3 snacks or 5-6 smaller meals, whichever works best for you.
- Power up with protein- If your goal is to gain muscle mass, the key is proper strength training combined with adequate calories and protein. Great protein sources include lean meats, seafood, beans, eggs, nuts and nut butters.

Please consult a registered dietitian or qualified health professional for further recommendations.

This medical and/or nutritional information is not intended to be a substitute for individual advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.