

## Meal suggestions for gaining weight

Try to eat at least three meals and two snacks every day.

### Breakfast

Porridge with full cream milk

Cereal and fruit with milk or yoghurt

Bread or toast with toppings

Tea, coffee, juice or a milky drink

### Morning, afternoon and evening snacks

Fruit or fruit juice

Crackers with cheese toppings

Sandwiches with a filling of fish, egg, meat or peanut butter

Biscuits or cake

Dairy dessert, yoghurt, tinned creamy rice

Tea, coffee, a milky drink, or soup

### Middle of the day

Home-made, frozen or chilled meals

Dessert eg, tinned fruit and ice-cream, custard, individual steamed puddings

Juice or a milky drink

### Evening meal

Frozen snack meals, or an egg dish or soup and toast

Sandwiches

Dessert e.g, tinned fruit and ice-cream, custard, or individual steamed puddings

Juice or a milky drink

**Aim to have 6–8 drinks such as water, milk or juice a day.**



## For more information

*Food Safety when you have low immunity*  
available from: <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz>

*A healthy diet for older people*  
available from the Ministry of Health, your local Public Health Unit  
or your local Age Concern office.

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**New Zealand Government**

May 2013

Ministry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu Matua



# Good food, safe food for older people

Ngā kai tōtika mo te  
hunga pakeke

## Clean:

- always use clean utensils.
- use separate chopping boards and utensils when preparing raw foods (especially meat and poultry) and cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- personal hygiene is vital to maintain food safety – always wash and dry your hands before handling food.

## Cook:

- cook food thoroughly to ensure any pathogens (disease-causing organisms) are killed.
- cook minced meat and sausages thoroughly (meat should not be pink) and cook poultry until the juices run clear.

## When reheating frozen meals, meals-on-wheels or leftovers:

- stir your food often to ensure it heats through evenly, especially when using the microwave.
- always leave microwaved food for the recommended stand time after heating so it finishes cooking.
- ensure the food is reheated thoroughly; it should be steaming hot right through to the middle.
- reheat leftovers only once, then throw any remainders out.

## Cover:

- keep food covered at all times unless it's being prepared or eaten – especially in the fridge (this stops other foods dripping onto it).

## Chill:

- keep raw and cooked foods separate in the fridge.
- defrost food in the fridge, not on the bench; room temperatures are ideal for pathogen growth.
- if you receive a warm meal (e.g. meals-on-wheels) and don't intend to eat it straight away, keep it in the fridge not on the bench.

## Ideas for gaining weight

As we get older we may (intentionally or unintentionally) eat less so it is important that the food that we eat is very nutritious. Older people who lose weight are more likely to suffer falls and broken bones. Unintentional weight loss can lead to increasing frailty and a loss of independence.

Here is some practical advice to help you eat well and gain weight:

- Try to have regular meals and small snacks throughout the day; eat every 2 to 3 hours; this will stimulate your appetite.
- Snacks are helpful – three small snacks a day are equal to one meal.
- Enjoy a pudding or dessert every day.
- Using full cream milk (with the dark blue or silver label or cap).
- Try frozen meals from your supermarket or order them home-delivered.
- Meals-on-wheels, frozen or chilled meals are a good way to get a nutritious meal but you will need to use additional foods at other meals.

**Also remember: buy food in small quantities so you can eat it all before it goes off. Buying lots when it's on sale doesn't pay off if you can't eat it before it spoils and makes you sick.**



- Try having your main meal in the middle of the day as you'll have more energy to prepare and eat your meals.
- Avoid the low fat varieties when you buy ready-made soups and desserts.
- Try milk shakes or protein/milk based supplements available from your supermarket or pharmacy, and remember it's important to make them up according to the directions on the packet to get the correct concentration.
- If you live alone, try to eat with friends and family sometimes – it's more enjoyable and you will find that you eat more.
- Try to spend some time out in the sun each day; we are all at risk of Vitamin D deficiency but if we get enough sunlight, our body makes its own Vitamin D which helps keep bones and muscles strong.
- Being in the sunshine, or getting fresh air can also help improve your appetite – get dressed and sit outside with a drink and snack.
- If you have been following a low fat diet check with your doctor whether that is still the best diet for you – it may be time to review your diet.
- If you continue to lose weight after changing your eating pattern, discuss this with your doctor.