Tips for Increasing Calories and Protein to Promote Weight Gain

Children go through phases when they are too busy to eat or just don't care about food. Other children going through medical treatment often have a decreased or no appetite, stop enjoying their food or lose weight. There are many things you can do to help improve your child's eating behavior/problems.

Hints to Help with Eating Problems:

- Having regular scheduled meals at the table set by the parent/caregiver is best.
- Avoid distractions, such as TV, while eating.
- Give nutritious food choices. Your child has the option of how much to eat.
- Make meal times calm and relaxed. Try not to hurry meals.
- Try changing the time, place, and surroundings of meals. A picnic can make meal time more fun, even if it is in the house.
- Let your child eat when he is hungry. Several smaller meals throughout the day may be better than three main meals.
- Praise good eating. Try using small rewards, such as a favorite dessert or a new toy, to encourage good eating at scheduled times at the table.
- Avoid arguing, nagging, or punishing. Forcing a child to eat may make the situation worse.
- If your child rejects all of one type of food at a meal, offer another food from that food group at the next meal or a snack to promote good nutrition.
- High sugar, low nutrient drinks or foods, such as Kool-Aid® and candy, may "spoil" your child's appetite without providing many calories and nutrients. Try puddings, peanut butter cookies, milkshakes, or other nutritious treats instead.
- Keep snacks, such as *peanuts or **peanut butter and cracker snacks, in your purse or glove box so a snack is available on the go.
- Try not to offer drinks right before meals or at the beginning of meals. The liquids may fill your child up and keep him from eating as much solid food during the meal.

The following is a list of foods and ideas, and how to add them to other foods to increase calories and protein in your child's diet. Also listed are ideas for snacks that are high in calories and protein. Pay special attention to those foods that have a star (*) or stars (**) by them. These foods may cause choking. They are not for children younger than 3 years of age.
Ways to Increase Calories and Protein:

**Food:**

**Powdered milk**
Combine whole milk with powdered milk (1 cup powdered milk to 1-quart whole milk). Add powdered milk to casseroles, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, puddings, custards, sauces, soups or use in baking by adding to batter.

**Milk, cream, or half-and-half**
Use in place of water in preparing foods such as hot cereals, hot cocoa, soups, batters, puddings or mashed potatoes. Serve cream sauces with vegetables or pasta dishes.

**Eggs and meat**
Add chopped, cooked eggs to salads, vegetables or casseroles. Add extra eggs to French toast, quiche or pancake batter. Add small pieces of cooked meats, poultry, or fish to casseroles, pasta salads, soups or omelets. Bread meat before cooking. Make custard. Add eggs to sandwich spreads.

**Cheese and yogurt**
Melt cheese on sandwiches, breads, muffins, tortillas, hot dogs and hamburgers. Use cheese in omelets, casseroles, sauces and pasta dishes. Use cottage cheese or yogurt with fruit. Spread cream cheese or soft cheeses on sandwiches, crackers, fruit slices or muffins. Roll cheese inside meats. Use yogurt to make shakes, fruit drinks, or as topping for cereal, pancakes, waffles or fruit.

**Peanut butter, beans, and nuts**
Add beans to soups, stews, casseroles and salads. Spread peanut butter on crackers, breads, bagels, fruits, or vegetables. Mix peanut butter in milk shakes, ice cream, frozen yogurt or baked goods. Add nuts to desserts, salads or ice cream. Serve vegetables or chips with bean dip.

**Fruits and vegetables**
Add mashed fruits to yogurt, shakes, ice cream or pudding. Add less water when mixing frozen juices. Use juice instead of water when making gelatin. Add dried fruit to cookies and other baked goods. Combine dried fruit with nuts or granola for snacks. Serve raw vegetables with dip.

**Nutritional supplements**
Carnation® Instant Breakfast™, PediaSure®, Kindercal®, Ensure®, and Boost® – consult dietician before using.

**High calorie additions**
Add these items liberally to food: butter, margarine, gravy, whipped cream, sour cream, cream cheese, mayonnaise, cream soups and cheese sauce. Add to mashed or baked potatoes, hot cereals, grits, rice, noodles, pasta and cooked vegetables.
Food preparation
Bread meats and vegetables. Sauté and fry foods. Add sauces or gravies to foods.

Good snack ideas
**Peanut butter and crackers, tortilla chips with cheese sauce, cheese pizza, tortilla chips and bean dip, yogurt with fruit, *trail mix, frozen yogurt, banana splits, chicken or tuna salad, vegetables with dip, milk shakes, pudding or pudding popsicles, cereal with whole milk, peanut butter or oatmeal raisin cookies, tacos and burritos

*These foods should not be given to children under 3 years of age, or you need to modify (cut up or chop) for safety.

**Peanut butter should not be given to children under 2 years of age.