

High-Calorie, High-Protein Diet

Cancer and cancer treatment may lessen your appetite and interest in food. When you don't have much of an appetite, you can make every bite count by eating foods that have a lot of calories and protein.

Meal Planning Tips

- Plan to eat a small meal within 1 hour of waking and then every 2 to 3 hours throughout the day. Try not to skip planned meals and snacks.
- Snack as often as possible on foods that have a lot of calories and a lot of protein.
- Eat your largest meal when your appetite is best.
- Try high-calorie, high-protein nutritional drinks (made at home or bought at a store) between meals to get in extra calories.
 - If you buy the drink at a store, read the label to look for products with 200 to 400 calories per serving. Ask your registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) for recommendations. Look for fruit-flavored high-calorie, high-protein nutritional drinks if you prefer noncreamy drinks.
 - If you make the drink at home, add ingredients like whole milk, powdered milk, protein powder, peanut butter, ice cream, or yogurt to add calories and protein.
- Try snacking on protein bars, puddings, milkshakes, and smoothies.
- Try eating a small bedtime snack, as this will not affect your appetite for your next meal.

High-Protein Food Choices

Good choices to add more protein to your meals and snacks include:

- Milk and dairy foods
- Eggs
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Legumes (beans and peas), nuts, and seeds

Here are some ideas to try:

Milk and Dairy Foods

- Eat cheese on toast or with crackers.
- Add grated cheese to baked potatoes, vegetables, soups, pasta, meat, or casseroles.
- Use whole milk in place of water when making hot cereal and cream soups.
- Choose Greek yogurt, which has more protein than regular yogurt.
- Add dried milk (powdered milk) to cream soups and mashed potatoes.

Eggs

- Keep hard-boiled eggs in the refrigerator. You can eat them “as is” or use them to make a quick egg salad. Or, you can chop the eggs and add them to salads, casseroles, soups, and vegetables.

Meats, Poultry, and Fish

- Add leftover cooked meats to soups, casseroles, salads, and omelets.
- Mix diced and flaked meat with sour cream or mayonnaise and spices to make a dip or sandwich spread.

Legumes (Beans, Peas, and Peanuts), Nuts, and Seeds

- Add beans and peas to salads, soups, casseroles, and vegetable dishes.
- Spread peanut butter on toast or fruit. Or blend it in a milkshake.
- Try other nut butters, such as cashew, almond, or sunflower seed.
- Sprinkle sunflower seeds or nuts on vegetables, salads, pasta, and desserts like fruit, ice cream, pudding, and custard.



High-Calorie Food Choices

To add more calories to your meals and snacks, focus on high-calorie foods like milk and dairy foods, butter and margarine, and condiments with a lot of calories.

Milk and Dairy Foods

- Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk have more calories than fat-free (skim) milk.
- Add heavy whipping cream to desserts, fruit, hot chocolate, soups, and casseroles.
- Add regular sour cream (not light) to scrambled eggs, baked potatoes, and vegetables.
- Drink milkshakes or high-calorie, high-protein nutritional drinks with the highest calories.

Sweets

- Add jelly, marmalade, or honey to bread and crackers.
- Top ice cream and cake with fruit jam or dried fruits.

Butter, Oils, and Condiments

- Try avocados in a salad, as a dip, or as a spread on sandwiches. Snack on guacamole or add avocado slices to sandwiches or salads.
- Snack on olives or hummus.
- Add butter or oil to potatoes, rice, pasta, cooked vegetables, sauces, soups, or casseroles.
- Spread butter or oil on bread for sandwiches.
- Use regular (not reduced-fat) mayonnaise or salad dressing on sandwiches and in dips or sauces.
- Add gravy or buttery sauces to meats and vegetables.
- Cook with olive oil or canola oil. Drizzle oils over cooked vegetables and pastas.

Sample High-Calorie, High-Protein Menu

Breakfast	Omelet with cheese and veggies
Snack	Graham cracker with peanut butter Whole milk
Lunch	Chicken or tuna salad sandwich (or on crackers)
Snack	Muffin with butter
Dinner	Chicken pot pie Peaches
Snack	Ice cream or frozen yogurt with nuts or fruit (or both)