



Strategies for Weight Gain

In order to gain weight, you have to consume more calories than you burn off during the day. In general, to gain 1 pound it requires you to consume an extra 3,500 calories, thus you would need to eat an additional 500 calories per day to gain 1 pound per week. Some athletes, however, have difficulty gaining weight and have to consume many more calories than this.

To take in the extra calories, you should plan on eating calorie dense foods frequently throughout the day. This includes:

- Three meals per day and several snacks throughout the day.
- Choose larger than normal portion sizes at meals and snacks.
- A hearty evening snack before bed.

The following are suggestions to help you boost your caloric intake throughout the day:

Beverages: With meals and snacks consume drinks that contain calories, such as juice, milk, lemonade, or sports drinks.

Juice: High calorie juice choices include cranberry, cranberry blends (cranapple, crangrape), grape, apple, and pineapple. To increase the calories in frozen juices add less water than the amount recommended in the directions.

Milk: Drink low-fat milk (2%) with added ingredients, such as Carnation Instant Breakfast, chocolate or strawberry syrup, Nestle Quick, or malt powder. You can also increase the calories of milk by adding powdered milk to your milk ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered milk to one cup of regular milk).

Breakfast: Eat breakfast every day to provide you with the energy you need for the day's activities. Follow the suggestions below to increase the calorie content of your breakfast.

Bagels, Muffins, Toast: Top with peanut butter, margarine, jam, or honey.

Breakfast on the Go: Enjoy a fruit parfait made with Greek yogurt, fruit, and granola; blend a fruit smoothie (recipe below), or make a pb&j on a bagel.

Fruit Smoothie: Blend $\frac{1}{2}$ frozen banana, 1 cup yogurt (Greek), 1 cup fruit juice, 1 cup frozen fruit, honey, ice, 2% milk, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry milk.

Cold Cereal: Choose higher-calorie cereals, such as, granola, Frosted Mini Wheats, Kashi Go Lean Crunch, wheat chex, and grape-nut. Add toppings such as bananas, berries, raisins, raisins, sliced almonds, and other fruits and nuts.

Hot Cereal: Cook cereal with milk and mix-in a variety of toppings such as margarine, peanut butter, brown sugar, walnuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, raisins, raisins, and other dried fruit.

Snacks: Adding snacks throughout the day is an excellent way to boost your caloric intake. High calorie snacks include: cheese or peanut butter crackers, trail mix, nuts, sunflower seeds, granola, bagels with pb&j, muffins, pizza, milk shakes, fruit smoothies, dried fruit, and sandwiches.

Lunch/Dinner: In addition to eating larger than normal portion sizes, ensure that you are choosing calorie dense options at meals.

Sandwiches: Select dense, high-calorie breads, such as multi-grain, honey wheat, bran, pumpernickel, and rye. Fill the sandwich with large servings of deli meat and cheese, peanut butter and jelly, chicken salad, or tuna fish. Include toppings such as mayonnaise, honey mustard, and avocado.

Meats: Opt for lean cuts of beef, poultry, and fish to avoid consuming excess amounts of saturated fat. Stir-fry meats with vegetables in oils (olive, canola), top with low-fat cheese and bake, or pan-fry.

Soups: Choose dense soups such as split pea, chowders, beef with barley, and lentil. To increase the calorie content of canned soup prepare using milk instead of water. Eat your soup with a large dinner roll topped with margarine.

Beans, Legumes: Add extra peas and beans to your meals to increase the calorie and protein content of your diet. Add beans to soups, chili, casseroles, or as side dishes.

Vegetables: Starchy vegetables such as potatoes, corn, and peas are higher calorie choices. Prepare vegetable with olive or canola oil or top with margarine, cheese, sliced almonds, or other nuts.

Salads: To increase the caloric content of salads, add high-calorie toppings such as: low-fat cheese, beans, sunflower seeds, dried fruits, nuts, raisins, deli meats, grilled chicken, croutons, and salad dressing.

Desserts: Add a healthy dessert to lunch and dinner. Possible dessert ideas include: oatmeal-raisin cookies; graham crackers or granola bars with peanut butter; Fig Newton's; frozen yogurt topped with nuts, fruit, granola, and chocolate syrup; pudding; carrot, zucchini, or banana nut bread; and bakery style muffins.

Evening Snack: End the day with a high calorie evening snack; preferably something that includes a good source of protein. Possible snack ideas are listed below.

- Large bagel with peanut butter & jelly with 2 cups of cranberry juice
- 1 cup granola with 2 cups of 2% milk and a banana
- Large blueberry muffin with margarine, 2 cups of chocolate milk
- Fruit and yogurt parfait (fruit, granola, nuts) with 2 cups pineapple juice
- 2 frozen waffles topped with margarine and peanut butter, 2 cups apple juice
- Fruit smoothie made with Greek yogurt, 2 crunchy granola bars

References:

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Sports Nutrition Care Manual: Weight gain/high-calorie meal plans for athletes. Available at: <http://www.nutritioncaremanual.org/>
Clark, Nancy. (2008). Nancy Clark's sports nutrition guidebook. 4th ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.