

# SportsNutrition

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## HOW TO GAIN WEIGHT HEALTHFULLY

To gain weight, you have to consume more energy than you burn off. Theoretically, this means eating an additional 500 calories a day to gain one pound per week. Some people, however, have difficulty gaining weight and have to eat far more—an extra 800 to 1,000 calories per day.

*Easy ways to boost your intake include:*

- An extra snack, such as a peanut butter and banana sandwich and a glass of milk at night.
- Larger than normal portions at meals, such as two sandwiches at lunch, not just one.
- Higher calories foods, such as grape juice instead of orange juice or water.

**Protein:** Thin people who want to gain weight often believe a high protein diet will help them bulk up. False! Extra *exercise* builds muscle, not extra protein. Although you may need a little extra protein to build muscle, your normal diet likely offers plenty.

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The following suggestions can help you wisely boost your energy intake. In addition, read the calorie information on food labels to compare foods so you can make the highest calorie choices.

**JUICE:** Grape, blueberry, cran-apple, cider, pineapple, and juice-blends are excellent for calories, carbohydrates, and fluids. For even more calories, use frozen juice concentrate and add less water than in the directions. Juices are 98% water, so they are rehydrating and can be used to replace sweat losses.

**FRUIT:** Bananas, pineapple, raisins, dates, dried apricots and other dried fruits offer more calories than watery fruits (grapes, plums, peaches.) Drink fruit smoothies!

**MILK:** To boost the calorie value of milk, add 1 cup powdered milk to 1 quart of 2% or whole milk. Then add Carnation Breakfast Essentials, Ovaltine, Nestle's Quik, protein powder, chocolate syrup, or other flavorings. Prepare a quart at a time, so you will have recovery drinks ready and waiting.

The average athlete's diet contains more than the recommended amount of protein. Hence, you do not need to spend money on protein powders, bars, and shakes. Instead, spend your money on health-promoting fruits and juices, such as 100% orange juice, bananas, dates, and raisins. These carbohydrates best fuel your body so you'll have energy to do muscle-building exercises. Lifting weights, along with adequate protein and calories, will add bulk.

**Fats:** Although fatty foods are calorie-dense, you can successfully and healthfully gain weight without "fat loading." If you choose to boost your calories with high fat foods, at least make them heart-healthy choices such as peanut butter and other nut butters, nuts, avocado, olive oil and salad dressings made with olive oil. Limit your intake of unhealthy saturated fats (bacon, ribs, fried foods, ice cream, and rich desserts.)

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**COLD CEREAL:** Choose *dense* cereals such as granola, Grape-Nuts, and Wheat Chex (rather than flaked or puffed types like Cheerios or Special K). Top with slivered almonds, banana, raisins, and other fruits.

**HOT CEREAL:** By cooking hot cereal with milk instead of water, you'll boost both calories and nutritional value. Add lots of mix-ins, such as powdered milk, peanut butter, banana, raisins, dates, walnuts, and sunflower seeds.

**TOAST:** Spread with generous amounts of peanut butter (or other nut butters), mashed avocado, hummus, jam, or honey.

**SANDWICHES:** Select hearty, dense breads (as opposed to "fluffy" types), such as whole wheat, multi-grain, honey bran, or rye. The thicker the slices, the better! Spread with a modest amount of mayonnaise. Generously stuff with turkey, chicken, lean roast beef, cheese, hummus, and other sandwich fillings. A peanut butter & banana sandwich is an inexpensive, calorie-rich, and healthful choice.

**SOUPS:** Hearty bean, minestrone, and barley soups have more calories than brothy soups. To make canned soups, such as tomato or chowder, more substantial, replace water or milk with evaporated milk, or add extra powdered milk. Garnish with grated cheese and croutons.

**MEATS:** Limit your intake of fatty meats and carefully select leaner cuts. You can boost the calorie value of lean chicken, meat, or fish by sautéing them in olive oil or canola oil, as well as by adding wine sauce and bread crumbs.

**BEANS, LEGUMES:** Lentils, split pea soup, chili with beans, refried beans, bean burritos, hummus, and other foods made with dried beans are both calorie-dense and nutrient-rich. They are good sports foods, offering both *carbs* and *protein*.

**VEGETABLES:** Corn, carrots, peas, beets, and winter squash have more calories than watery vegetables such as broccoli, summer squash, green beans, and spinach. Sprinkle with olive oil, slivered almonds, and/or grated cheese.

**SALADS:** What starts out being low-calorie lettuce can be quickly converted into a substantial meal by adding cottage cheese, chickpeas, avocado, roasted vegetables, sunflower seeds, chopped walnuts, raisins, flaked tuna, grilled chicken, tofu, croutons, and salad dressing (preferably made with olive oil.)

**POTATO:** Toppings for baked potato include cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, lite sour cream, pesto, chili, or low-fat gravy. Boost calories in mashed potato by adding olive oil.

**DESSERTS:** By selecting desserts made with wholesome ingredients, you can enjoy a treat as well as nourish your body. Try frozen yogurt, oatmeal raisin cookies, Fig Newtons, chocolate pudding, apple cake, or pumpkin pie. Even blueberry muffins, banana bread, corn bread with honey, and other breakfast breads can double as dessert, as can whole-grain muffins and breads.

**SNACKS:** A substantial afternoon and evening snack—or better yet, a second lunch and second dinner—are an excellent way to boost your calorie intake. If you don't feel hungry, just think of the food as *weight gain medicine* that you need to reach your goal.

Some smart snack choices include fruit yogurt & granola, frozen yogurt, cheese & crackers, apple or banana & peanut butter, peanuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, trail mix, granola bars, energy bars, pretzels, English muffins, bran muffins, whole-grain bagels, peanut butter crackers, milk shakes, instant breakfast drinks, hot cocoa, dates, raisins, thick crust veggie pizza, and sandwiches. A peanut butter & banana sandwich is a simple way to consume an additional 500 calories

**ALCOHOL:** For adults, a glass of beer or wine, along with snacks such as peanuts and pretzels, can add extra calories and stimulate the appetite. Because alcohol offers little nutritional value, do not substitute it for juice, milk, or other wholesome beverages—and drink it in moderation!

## CONCLUSION

By consuming the prescribed 500 to 1,000 additional calories each day, you should see some weight gain. Be sure to perform muscle-building exercise two or three times per week, so you bulk up rather than “get fat.”

If you don't gain weight after two weeks of consistently consuming more food at meals and snacks, look at your family members. Have you inherited a naturally trim physique? Observe your personal activity patterns. That is, are you a *fidgeter* who burns every calorie you consume? If so, can you try to mellow-out?

Also be mindful that most skinny kids gain weight as they get older. Your turn will likely come. For now, work on your athletic skills and enjoy being lean, light, and quick. You can indeed be an excellent athlete without being bulky.