



## Nutrition and Dietetics

# General Malnutrition

### Information for patients who are underweight, losing weight unintentionally, or who are of any weight category but with a poor appetite

This information has been created by The Dorset County Hospital Dietetics Services to support patients, as well as family members, carers and health professionals to assist those in their initial recovery following discharge from hospital who may have lost weight and/or have experienced a reduced appetite. This information also applies to those at risk of malnutrition at home in the community.

During and following illness, you need to have extra protein and calories to increase your strength and repair muscle. This is especially important if you have a lost weight and/or have an ongoing poor appetite.

Main points to remember:

- **Mealtimes:** Try to include 3 small meals per day, as well as 2-3 snacks or milky drinks. A little and often approach, with six high calorie smaller snacks over the day, may work best. Try to take your time with food and sit upright if possible in a relaxed environment.
- Please look at this Malnutrition Pathway diet sheet for some tips to increase your calorie intake: [https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet\\_yellow.pdf](https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet_yellow.pdf)
- Also take a look at the Dorset County Hospital-produced diet sheet for snack and finger food ideas for those who have difficulty with finishing main meals or who struggle with using cutlery: <https://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients/patient-information-leaflets/Pages/Nutrition-and-Dietetics-Leaflets.aspx>
- For milky drink ideas which can be made at home, including dairy-free shakes, please see: [https://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients/patient-information-leaflets/Documents/Nourishing%20Drinks%20Recipes%20\(January%20%202020\).pdf](https://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients/patient-information-leaflets/Documents/Nourishing%20Drinks%20Recipes%20(January%20%202020).pdf)
- **Access to food:** If you have reduced energy levels and/or have limited cooking skills, stock up on store cupboard items. These include basic tinned foods, frozen food and ready meals.

- Dorset Council has information on services available for support with shopping. Please see: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/health-and-wellbeing/eating-for-good-health/shopping-for-and-preparing-food.aspx>
- Dorset Council has also put together a guide to meal delivery services available in Dorset. These include frozen meals, as well as meals ready to eat served to your door. Please see: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/health-and-wellbeing/eating-for-good-health/meal-delivery-and-lunch-clubs.aspx>
- **Swallowing Difficulties:** Signs of swallowing difficulties when eating or drinking include choking or coughing at mealtimes, sensation of food getting stuck in the throat, frequent heartburn bringing food back up, hoarse voice or voice sounds 'wet'
- Contact your GP/Practice Nurse who will be able to offer advice and a specialist referral
- If you already have a Speech and Language Therapy Team contact and have concerns your swallowing problems are getting worse, please make contact with your Therapist.

## Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to:

Nutrition and Dietetics Department: 01305 254415

## About this leaflet:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email [pals@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@dchft.nhs.uk)



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