



Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Finger Foods

Finger foods can be particularly useful for people who forget to eat or find co-ordination difficult, such as those with dementia or following a stroke. If a person has a swallowing difficulty, finger foods are not usually suitable.

Finger foods can be:

- Served at the table in place of a plated meal
- Offered as snacks between meals
- Left in different places to pick up and eat through the day

For people with diabetes

The foods below that are marked with an asterisk (*) can be high in sugar. However, if your appetite is poor and you are struggling to eat, these foods may be suitable. If you are concerned about your diabetes, or need advice around matching your food with your diabetes medication, please contact your GP and ask for a referral to a diabetes specialist dietitian.

Food groups

Suggestions are divided into the following food groups to help plan a balanced menu:

High protein	Especially important in older and malnourished people to help reduce the risk of falls, infections and pressure ulcers
Starchy carbohydrates (carbs)	Important for fibre, vitamins, minerals and energy
Fruit and vegetables	Normally these should represent a third to a half of our daily diet. However, for someone who is malnourished, these are lower in calories than the other food groups, so be careful not to fill up on these and miss out on high calorie foods
High fat/sugar	High in energy (calories) so good for weight gain, but low in protein. Some people with diabetes may need to be careful with the amount of sugary foods they eat

High Protein Finger Foods

Cold meat pieces	Scampi pieces	Nuts
Chicken drumsticks	Meat/fish on skewers	Cheese cubes
Fish fingers/goujons	Sushi	Spring rolls
Crab sticks	Boiled egg halves	Samosas or pakoras
Cooked prawns	Mini quiche	Marinated tofu pieces

To increase calories: add or dip in full fat mayonnaise, cream cheese, tartare sauce, hummus or Greek yoghurt. Offer as extra snacks between meals.

Starchy Carbohydrate Finger Foods

Toast cut into fingers	Oatcakes/crackers	Chips or potato wedges
Small bread rolls	Biscuits/cereal bars*	Small new/roast potatoes
Finger sandwiches	Mini naan/pitta breads	Crisps
Eggy bread squares	Small chapatti	Rice cakes
Malt/fruit loaf	Pizza slices	Popcorn
Crumpets	Quiche slices	Mini pastries/tartlets

Ideas for fillings/toppings: try meat/fish paste, mashed tinned fish, tuna or egg mayonnaise, marmite, cream cheese, hummus, tahini or nut butters

To increase calories: add butter, full fat mayonnaise, jam*, peanut butter or clotted cream

Fruit and Vegetable Finger Foods

Mini or sliced banana	Peach/nectarine slices	Cherry tomatoes
Orange segments	Mango slices	Radishes
Sliced apple/pear	Fruit kebab	Sugar snap peas
Grapes and berries	Dried fruit*	Baby corn
Melon chunks	Salad sticks (carrot, celery, pepper, cucumber)	Cooked vegetables eg broccoli spears, cauliflower florets, green beans
Pineapple chunks		

To increase calories: dip vegetables into hummus, cream cheese, guacamole and yoghurt or spread with nut butter or cheeses. For fruit, dip into yoghurt or clotted cream.

High Fat/Sugar Finger Foods and Dessert Ideas

Bhajis, pakoras, samosas	Fun size cake bars*	Biscuits*
Mini croissants, pastries, pains au chocolat*	Iced buns*	Ice lolly*
Mini brioche rolls*	Cake pieces*	Mini fruit pie*
Mini muffins*	Flapjacks*	Jam tarts*
	Fun size chocolates*	Mince pies*

Example of Finger Food Menus

Adapt these menus to take into account individual likes, dislikes and dietary requirements.

Example Menu 1

Breakfast

Eggy bread squares, 3-4 dried apricots

Drink

Mid-Morning

Cereal bar and drink

Lunch

Mini beef/lentil burger in mini bread buns with tomato sauce, potato wedges and carrots

Malt loaf and drink

Mid-Afternoon

Squares of toast with pate or cream cheese

Drink

Evening Meal

Chicken/Tofu and vegetable skewers with yogurt dip, salad sticks, pitta slices

Slices/piece of fruit

Bedtime

Milky drink eg Horlicks, Ovaltine, hot chocolate or milk shake

Example Menu 2

Breakfast

Hard-boiled egg in quarters, toast squares with butter, fruit juice

Mid-Morning

Flapjack/plain cake or fruit slices and drink

Lunch

Mini quiche with baby potatoes, broccoli spears

Mini fruit pie/cake and drink

Mid-Afternoon

Cheese cubes and grapes

Drink

Evening Meal

Mini sandwiches eg tuna mayonnaise, egg and cress, hummus, peanut butter, soft cheese, salad sticks

Mini cake or pastry

Bedtime

Milky drink eg Horlicks, Ovaltine, Hot chocolate or milk shake

Tips When Offering a Finger Food Menu

- Be creative and make the menu varied
- Present food appealingly e.g. attractive plate, different coloured foods
- Use foods that are easy to hold. For people who wander, choose foods that can be eaten on the move or carried in a pouch
- People's capabilities can change, finger foods might be better at certain mealtimes and plated meals at others
- Show the person what to do so they can copy
- Allow time for the person to look at the food and explore it
- Take time to describe the food
- Some foods will lose their freshness and appeal if left out for too long, so may need replacing
- Provide wipes or hot flannels to wipe hands before and after meals

Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the following Dorset County Hospital Staff:

Nutrition & Dietetic Department: 01305 254415
Diabetes Centre: 01305 255130

Useful Websites:

www.alzheimers.org.uk
www.diabetes.org.uk
www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk

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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



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