

## Simple tips and tweaks for when appetites are low- April 2020

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A positive amidst the chaos of COVID-19 is the heightened sense of community spirit, shown by local communities coming together to support those most in need. With neighbours lending a helping hand, dedicated supermarket hours and local shops offering home deliveries, many residents are trying to make sure no one is going to bed at night with a rumbling stomach.

Appetites can fluctuate greatly from day to day depending on multiple factors, including fresh air, socialising and illness (all topical buzzwords at present!). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that these uncertain times may also result in prolonged periods of irregular eating patterns for some.

As a community dietitian, a chunk of my working day involves visiting patients that are struggling to consume enough; consequently falling short of nutritional requirements and increasing their risk of malnutrition. Luckily, there are many simple, tasty tips and tweaks to help ensure diets remain complete even if eating becomes a chore.

An over flowing plate of food can be off putting if an appetite is non-existent; instead try smaller portions of well-balanced meals, snacks or puddings every 1-2 hours and always keep foods and fluids within reach. Nutrient-dense offerings may include a slice of toast spread with peanut butter and sliced banana, half a sandwich filled with chicken and avocado or full fat yogurt topped with tinned peaches and granola. We also eat with our eyes, so going that extra mile with presentation and garnishing can be effective.

Try to ensure all small portions are jam-packed with nutrition. Maximise content, without increasing volume size, by squeezing in high calorie and protein ingredients; for example, stirring honey, jam, marmalade, lemon curd, sugar, nut butter, ground almonds, dried fruit, nuts or desiccated coconut into sweet dishes, and mixing grated cheese, cream, butter, margarine spreads, olive oil, croutons, avocado, mayonnaise, hummus or pesto into savoury foods.

If taste buds have altered, experiment with new flavours and re-try previously disliked options. Add an extra oomph with black pepper, herbs, spices, marinades, sauces and condiments. Savoury foods may be greeted with upturned noses, so instead optimise sweet snacks and desserts. Additionally, trial sweet and savoury collaborations; for example, roasting vegetables with a drizzle of honey, baking fish with a generous squeeze of orange and marinating sausages in marmalade. Meats may also become more palatable served alongside a spoonful of preferred pickle or chutney.

Try to avoid large consumptions of fluids just before or during eating, as this can be overly filling, and instead sip on nourishing liquids in between meal times. Appropriate options may include milky drinks (such as chilled milk, milkshakes and warm options such as hot chocolate, Ovaltine and Horlicks), pure fruit juice, smoothies, full sugar squash or cordials, and smooth soups. Whipping up your own homemade options provides the flexibility to blitz in lots of desirable, nutritious extras. A small amount of pure fruit juice or alcohol (if appropriate) roughly 1 hour before a meal can also help to perk-up an appetite.

Although it goes against the grain, switching over to full fat and full sugar products may be advisable if someone is finding eating troublesome. A step further from using full fat milk (or even the creamy gold top) is upping the game to fortified milk. This involves whisking 4 tablespoons of milk powder into every 1 pint of full fat milk; increasing the calorie and protein content every time there is a dash in tea, poured over cereal or whipped up into milky puddings.

Make life stress-free and opt for quick and easy to prepare options, as no one with a reduced appetite will want to stand for long periods in the kitchen or fuff with complex recipes. Consider frozen and tinned products, prepared vegetables and healthier ready meals. Optimise good days by batch cooking to fill any remaining freezer space and don't be afraid to ask loved ones for a helping hand (even if this involves dropping shopping and meals at your front gate).

Most supermarkets offer home deliveries, with some companies accepting orders over the telephone, and there are many readymade meal delivery services available; such as Wiltshire Farm Foods, Oakhouse Foods and Parsley Box. Lots of fantastic local shops are also currently offering deliveries to your door step, including Eat 17 and COOK.

Although we are all feeling hemmed in; optimise your once a day outing, and use garden space and balconies to get a blast of fresh air. If all else fails, crack open the windows and patio doors to help build up an appetite.

Be creative- it's surprising how quickly miniscule modifications add up. Please contact your GP if you are concerned about appetite or weight loss, and for individualised dietary advice request a referral to the community dietitian (we don't bite!).



***Staple kitchen ingredients can help optimise an individual's calorie and protein intake***

### **Local Treat: Meals on wheels**

*Herts Meals* provide piping hot dishes directly to the local community at home, alongside a friendly and reliable face, every single lunch time of the year.

Their kitchens freshly prepare everything from wholesome, hearty classics, such as bangers and mash, chicken casserole and breaded fish, to lighter options, including salads and jacket potatoes. They also make sure no one has to miss out on a Sunday roast!

All meals are cooked up with locally sourced, seasonal ingredients and include at least 2 portions of fruits and vegetables. Every main course is served with a sweet dessert and the option to have a sandwich and cake delivered, ready and waiting for tea time.

*Herts Meals* have a varied 2 week set menu and offer alternative choices suitable for vegetarians and individuals with diabetes. They are also happy to try and accommodate for other nutritional needs and special dietary requirements.

Another valuable perk includes staff promptly contacting a next of kin if they are concerned about customer behaviour, health or unanswered doors; as it is always helpful to have another set of eyes.

They endeavour to be affordable, flexible and nutritious. Visit the website ([www.hertsmeals.co.uk](http://www.hertsmeals.co.uk)) or pick up the phone to get meals on wheels up and rolling.



# HERTS MEALS

### Recipe: Alex's Calorie and Protein Packed Porridge

If your appetite is reduced, this small bowl of nourishing porridge provides a whopping 738 calories and 32g protein per serving. Perfect for helping a little to go a long way!

**Serves:** 1

#### Ingredients:

- 40g oats
- 280ml fortified full fat milk (whisk 4 tbsp. of skimmed milk powder into every 1 pint of full fat milk- store leftovers in the fridge and use for drinks, cooking and puddings)
- 1 tbsp. ground almonds
- 1 small banana
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 3 chopped Brazil nuts (or any nuts)

#### Method:

1. Measure out the oats and fortified milk into a sauce pan
2. Heat through on a medium heat whilst stirring continuously
3. When the porridge is at your desired consistency, mix in the ground almonds
4. Pour the porridge into a bowl and top with sliced banana, honey and chopped nuts

