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# What is Malnutrition?

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Malnutrition is a condition where you have not consumed the nutrients you need for basic body functions for an extended period.

When you go many days without eating enough, your body will start to break down muscle and fat to use for energy. When you are sick, this process starts to happen sooner than if you were healthy. As a result, you may lose weight without trying. Malnutrition can also contribute to other problems, such as:

- Higher risk of falling
- Poor wound healing
- Higher risk of bed sores (pressure injuries)
- Low energy
- Loss of strength & feeling weaker
- Slower recovery after surgeries
- More time in the hospital
- Being readmitted to the hospital after leaving

Eating more will help you get the nutrients you need. Your body needs calories and protein to keep your weight and energy up. Usually, malnutrition will improve as you consistently eat more nutritious foods.

## **What to do if you have a poor appetite:**

- Eat small meals more often. Try to eat a small amount every 2-3 hours.
- Have meals that are easy to prepare such as sandwiches or ready-to-eat items.
- Try to make eating enjoyable! Choose favorite foods, go out to a favorite restaurant, or play music.
- Use seasonings to enhance flavor.
- Try to eat larger meals when you feel the best. Often, people feel better earlier in the day or after a nap when they are rested.
- Make every bite count by choosing items high in calories and protein.

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## Healthy Ways to Add Calories:

- **Oil** (olive, canola, peanut)
  - Add to vegetables, meat, pasta, tomato sauce, salads, or dip for bread
- **Nuts and Nut Butters** (almonds, walnuts, cashews, and peanut butter)
  - Add to trail mix, sprinkle onto salads or yogurt, spread on crackers, vegetables, fruit, or pancakes
- **Fatty Fish** (tuna, salmon, halibut, sardines, and trout)
  - Add to sandwiches, salads, rice, pasta, eat on top of crackers
- **Avocados and Olives**
  - Add to sandwiches, salads, Mexican food, soups, casseroles, eggs
- **Nutrition supplements, whey protein powder, or other powder drink mixes**
  - Add to flavor milk, yogurt, smoothies, hot cereal

## Healthy Ways to Add Protein:

- **Meat, Fish, and Cheese**
  - Add to salads, casseroles, soups, omelets, quiches, and sandwich fillings
- **Beans**
  - Add beans or peas to soups, casseroles, pastas, tacos or burritos
- **Milk and Yogurt**
  - Blend with fruits to make a smoothie, use as a dipping sauce for fruits and vegetables, or scoop on top of pancakes or waffles
  - Use higher protein content milk
- **Eggs**
  - Add hard-cooked eggs to salads, put them in a sandwich, or add scrambled eggs to a tortilla with beans and cheese