

Information resources for families

High energy diets for infants

when receiving treatment for cancer

There may be several reasons why your baby needs a high energy diet while on treatment:

- Your baby's condition or the treatment they are on requires a higher energy intake than other infants their age
- They have or had a poor appetite
- They have problems with slow growth or weight loss due to side effects of treatment
- Your baby may need to gain or 'catch up' adequate weight.

Eating a balanced diet, including foods from all of the major food groups, is important in the first year of life to provide nutrients such as protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals. However, some of the solids offered during baby's first year are low in energy.

Following are some suggestions to increase the energy content of some solids from each food group.

Increasing the energy content of food and drink

Breads and cereals

Make up cereal (suitable for age) with your baby's formula or breast milk instead of water e.g. iron-fortified rice cereal, Vitabrits or Weetbix mixed with formula.

Soft bread or plain biscuits with a generous spread of margarine, cooked noodles, pasta and rice with melted butter, cheese or creamy sauces can be given to older infants.

Fruit

Offer a variety of fresh or tinned fruits. Use mashed fruits for younger infants and if developmentally ready, chopped fruit for older infants. Polyjoule, cream, yoghurt or custard can also be added.

Avocado is high in energy and can be spread thickly onto soft bread or served mashed on a spoon.

Vegetables

Add oil, or melt butter or margarine over mashed or whole cooked pieces of vegetable. Also try melting grated cheese over the top, or serving vegetables with a creamy cheese sauce. Make puréed vegetable soups with grated cheese and milk rather than water.

Meat

Margarine and gravy can be added to chicken, meat, egg or fish.

Dairy

Full fat dairy products should be used until your baby is around two years of age. Yoghurt, custard or milk puddings (made with your baby's formula or cow's milk) can be served alone or with fruit. A little cream can also be added. Add full cream milk powder to milk to use for drinks and in cooking. Your Dietitian can give you a specific recipe.

Continue to offer your child breast milk or infant formula until at least 12 months of age. Ask your Dietitian about ways you can increase the energy content of breast milk or infant formula.

If you are using tins or jars of baby food, add margarine, oil or butter to savoury products such as meat, cereals and vegetables, add cream, sugar or Polyjoule to sweet products such as fruit or yoghurts.

Polyjoule

Polyjoule is a tasteless carbohydrate polymer that can be added to food and drink to increase the energy content. If recommended by your dietitian, here are some ways you can use polyjoule in food and drinks.

Drinks

Add 1–2 tablespoons of polyjoule to a glass of juice/milk/cordial or savoury liquids like soup. You can make a concentrated solution by mixing 5 scoops of Polyjoule with 200ml of water and add to cordials/jellies/mousse etc. You can also use this solution in cooking.

Foods

Sprinkle and stir 1–2 tablespoons of Polyjoule into foods like breakfast cereal, tinned or pureed fruit, custard, yoghurt, mashed vegetables, stew, casserole, gravy and sauces.

Please note: If Polyjoule is to be used with breastfeeding or infant formula, your dietitian will give you a specific recipe.

If your child develops symptoms of acute gastroenteritis such as vomiting or diarrhoea, you should stop using Polyjoule for the duration of the illness.