**How to help your child gain weight**

**There could be several reasons your child or a child you care for is underweight. If it's because they're not getting enough calories there are things you can do to help.**

Its important children get the right amount of calories, nutrients and minerals to support healthy growth.

The good news is that you can help them get more calories by making changes to what they eat and drink and encouraging healthy habits.

**Check if your child is underweight**

It can be difficult to know if your child is underweight. Growth spurts, illness and changes to their routine can have a big impact on their weight.

A good place to start is by calculating their body mass index (BMI), Weight/Age centile, Height/Age centile.

Contact your child’s paediatrician if:

* you’re worried your child is underweight
* they've lost weight quickly without changing what they eat and drink
* you're worried about their eating habits
* you think they have a food intolerance or allergy
* things you're trying yourself are not helping

**Tips to help your child gain weight**

**Do**

* include more starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes, bread or rice in meals
* increase their calorie intake with healthy fats – add grated cheese to meals and make porridge with milk
* give them high-calorie drinks in between meals, such as milkshakes or smoothies
* encourage a healthy attitude to eating – include them in the food preparation and try to eat together
* have snacks available if they get hungry between meals – try yoghurts, breadsticks and small sandwiches
* help them get enough vitamins by giving children aged from 6 months old to 5 years old vitamin A, C and D drop every day
* introduce new foods gradually and in small portions – if they're a fussy eater this will help them get used to new foods

**Don’t**

* do not rely on unhealthy food for weight gain – swap cakes and crisps for a banana or cheese on crackers
* do not give them drinks and snacks before eating – they might be too full to eat and will miss out on essential nutrients
* try not to get frustrated if they do not eat everything on their plate – it might turn mealtimes into a negative experience
* do not stop them exercising – physical activity will help them develop stronger bones and muscles

Reference: *NHS / UK*