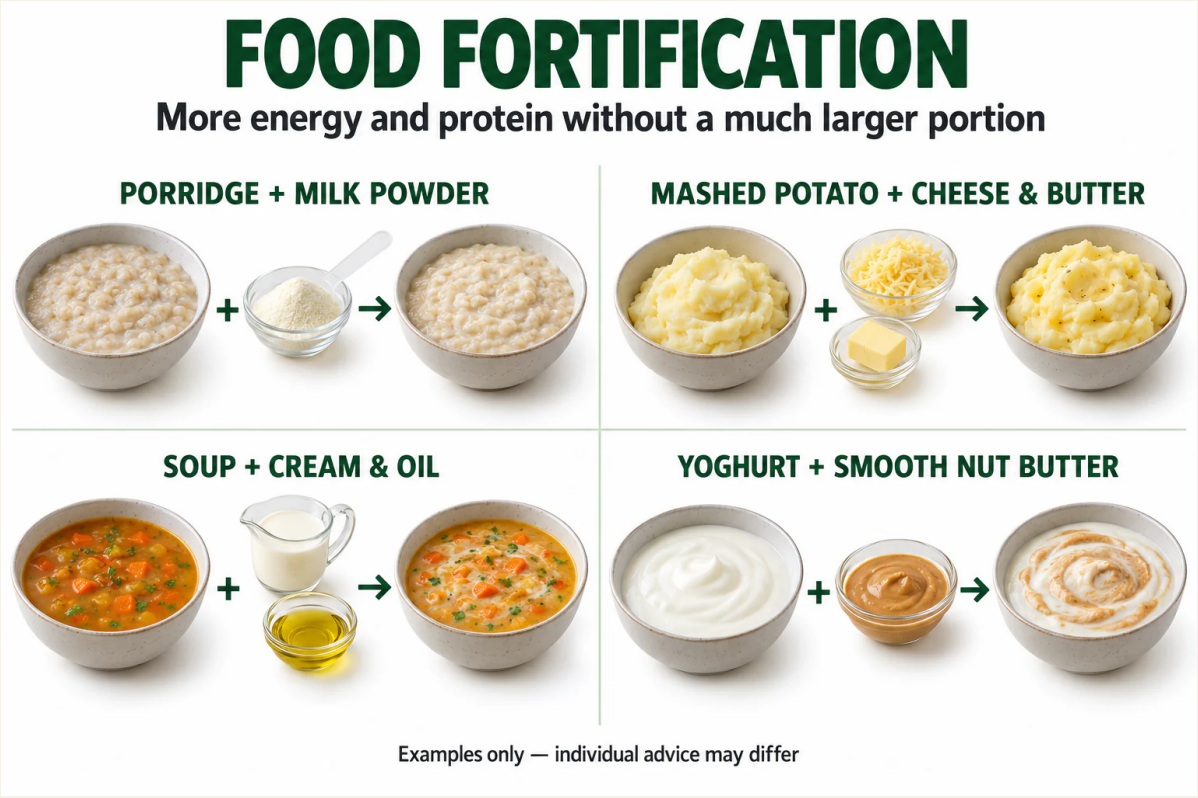
DYSLEXIC DIETITIAN

Food fortification: more nutrition in every mouthful

Practical ideas for adults with a poor appetite, unintentional weight loss or increased nutritional needs.

The main thing to remember

Food fortification adds energy, protein and other nutrients to familiar foods without making the portion much larger. Unintentional weight loss still needs assessment so that the cause is not missed.



Examples only. Fortification should be adapted to medical needs, allergies, swallowing safety and food preferences.

01 When food fortification may help

Poor appetite and nutritional risk

Food fortification may be useful when someone is eating less than usual, losing weight unintentionally, recovering from illness or surgery, or needs more energy and protein than they can manage from ordinary portions.

Possible signs of nutritional risk

- Unplanned weight loss
- Looser clothes or jewellery
- Poor appetite or reduced intake
- Weakness or muscle loss
- Slow recovery or wound healing

Reasons intake may fall

- Pain, nausea or fatigue
- Mouth, dental or swallowing problems
- Low mood, anxiety or isolation
- Reduced mobility or food access
- Acute or long-term illness

Disease-related malnutrition

Illness can reduce appetite while inflammation, healing or other demands increase nutritional requirements. Eating less while the body needs more can accelerate weight and muscle loss, reduce strength and slow recovery.

Arrange a medical review

Unintentional weight loss is not an inevitable part of ageing. Speak to a GP or healthcare professional if weight is falling, intake is poor, strength is declining or symptoms interfere with eating.

Seek prompt advice

Difficulty or pain when swallowing, repeated choking, persistent vomiting, blood in vomit or stools, black stools, severe abdominal pain, dehydration, confusion or rapid deterioration require prompt medical assessment.

02 A little and often

Make eating more achievable

Large portions can feel overwhelming. Smaller meals, snacks and nourishing drinks spread across the day may provide more nutrition overall.

- Aim for 3 smaller meals and 2 or 3 snacks or nourishing drinks each day.
- Eat when appetite and energy are usually best, even if it is not a traditional mealtime.
- Keep convenient foods within reach and accept help with shopping, cooking or meal delivery.
- Choose foods that are enjoyable and easy to eat. Ready meals and convenience foods can be useful.
- If drinks make you feel full, take most fluids after or between meals while maintaining hydration.
- Choose full-fat or higher-energy versions while restoring intake, unless advised otherwise.
- Include a protein-rich food at meals and useful snacks where possible.

Protein-rich choices

- Milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Eggs, fish, meat and poultry
- Beans, lentils and tofu
- Nuts, seeds and nut butters

Energy-rich additions

- Olive or rapeseed oil
- Butter, spread or cream
- Avocado
- Ground nuts or seeds

Food first does not mean food only

A balanced plan should consider energy, protein, fluid, fibre, vitamins and minerals. A dietitian may recommend supplements when ordinary food is not enough.

03 Fortifying familiar foods

Small additions, useful differences

Choose additions that suit the dish and your preferences. Where practical, combine an energy-rich ingredient with a protein-rich ingredient.

Food or meal	Ways to add energy and protein
Porridge or cereal	Use full-fat or fortified milk. Add milk powder, full-fat yoghurt, cream, nut butter, ground nuts, seeds, dried fruit or honey where suitable.
Toast, crackers or crumpets	Add butter or spread plus cheese, egg, peanut butter, hummus, avocado, pate or a second sandwich filling.
Eggs	Add fortified milk, grated cheese, butter, cream cheese, ham or smoked fish.
Soup	Add cream, oil, milk powder, grated cheese, beans, lentils, meat, ground nuts or nut butter where appropriate.
Mashed potato	Mix in fortified milk, cheese, butter, oil, cream, cream cheese or milk powder.
Vegetables	Add oil, butter, cheese, pesto, mayonnaise, cream cheese or a creamy sauce.
Sauces and casseroles	Add fortified milk, cheese, cream, creme fraiche, oil, beans, lentils, meat or tofu.
Yoghurt or puddings	Choose full-fat varieties and add milk powder, cream, nut butter, ground nuts, seeds, fruit or honey where suitable.

Keep portions manageable

The aim is to enrich food without increasing volume so much that it becomes harder to finish. Additions can be introduced gradually according to taste and tolerance.

Practical food-first tools

Fortified milk recipe

Mix **4 tablespoons (about 50 g) of skimmed milk powder** with a little of **1 pint (568 ml) of full-fat milk** to make a smooth paste. Gradually stir in the remaining milk. Product values vary, but this typically provides about **540 kcal and 37 g protein per pint**. Store covered in the fridge and follow the milk's use-by guidance.

Ways to use fortified milk

- On cereal or in porridge.
- In milky coffee, hot chocolate or milkshakes.
- In soup, white sauce, mashed potato or scrambled egg.
- In custard, rice pudding or other milky desserts.

Nourishing snack ideas

- Full-fat yoghurt with fruit, ground nuts or nut butter.
- Cheese and crackers, egg on toast or half a filled sandwich.
- Hummus with bread, pitta or crackers.
- Milky pudding, custard, mousse or fruit with cream.
- Nuts and dried fruit, if safe to chew and swallow.

Nourishing drinks

Milky coffee, hot chocolate, milkshakes, smoothies and yoghurt drinks can provide more nutrition than tea, coffee, water or low-calorie drinks alone. Use them between meals where possible so they do not replace food unintentionally.

Allergies and special diets

Use suitable alternatives for allergies or intolerances. Plant-based drinks vary widely in energy, protein and fortification, so compare labels and seek advice if they form a major part of intake.

05 My food-fortification plan

Plan one achievable day

Choose ideas that fit your appetite, routine and food preferences. The aim is a practical pattern you can repeat, not a perfect day.

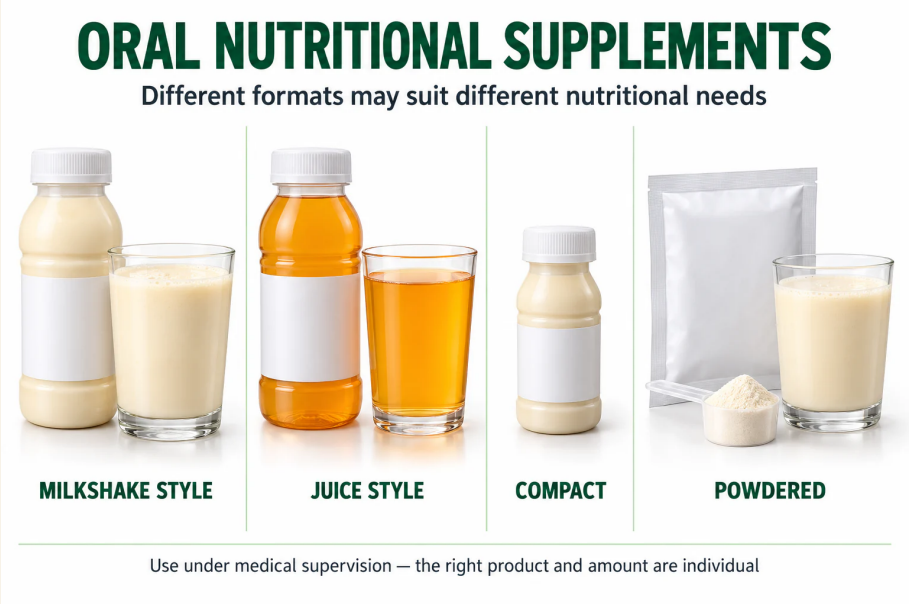
Time	My meal, snack or drink	How I will fortify it
Breakfast		
Mid-morning		
Lunch		
Mid-afternoon		
Evening meal		
Supper or bedtime		

My priority	What I will try
Meal or snack to improve	
Nourishing drink	
Help I may need	

06 When food alone is not enough

Oral nutritional supplements and individual advice

A doctor or dietitian may recommend oral nutritional supplements when someone is malnourished or at risk and meals, snacks and food fortification are not meeting their needs. The product, amount and timing should match the person's medical and nutritional requirements.



Milkshake, juice-style, compact, high-protein, powdered and dessert-style products are available. Products are not interchangeable for every person.

Tailored advice is especially important

- For diabetes, kidney, liver or pancreatic disease, food allergies or therapeutic restrictions.
- When coughing, choking or difficulty swallowing may require assessment by a speech and language therapist.
- When nausea, diarrhoea, constipation, fluid restriction or poor tolerance affects the plan.
- When weight continues to fall despite food-first changes.

Very low intake and refeeding risk

If someone has eaten little or nothing for more than 5 days, particularly with substantial weight loss, nutrition may need to be increased cautiously with clinical and biochemical monitoring. Contact a healthcare professional rather than suddenly starting a large intake.

07 Review and trusted support

Is the plan helping?

- Weight is stable or moving towards the agreed goal.
- Meals, snacks and drinks are manageable.
- Energy, strength or daily function is improving.
- Symptoms and bowel tolerance remain acceptable.
- The plan still provides variety, fluid, fibre, vitamins and minerals where appropriate.
- The underlying cause of reduced intake or weight loss is being addressed.

Ask for further help

Speak to a GP or dietitian if weight continues to fall, intake remains poor, the plan conflicts with another condition, swallowing is difficult or the advice is not manageable.

Reliable information

NICE: Nutrition support for adults

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg32

NHS: Malnutrition

www.nhs.uk/conditions/malnutrition/

NHS: Treating malnutrition

www.nhs.uk/conditions/malnutrition/treatment/

BAPEN: Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool

www.bapen.org.uk/screening-and-must/must/

Dyslexic Dietitian: Nutritional support guide

www.dyslexicdietitian.com/nutritional-support

Educational information only

This guide provides general information for adults. It does not diagnose malnutrition, explain unexplained weight loss or replace an individual nutrition-support plan.

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