

Ways to Add Calories to Children's Diets

By Judith Aronson-Ramos, M.D.

Stimulant medications can result in decreased appetite, slowed growth and at times actual weight loss. Here are some strategies to help with these problems. Offering nutrient rich and healthy snacks when the effects of the medication have worn off and allowing children to eat snacks that are more like mini-meals can help with issues of slow weight gain or weight loss.

- Add powders such as Carnation Instant Breakfast or Ovaltine to milk to increase the caloric content. You can also find other products at many health food stores which can increase the caloric content of milk and other beverages.
- Make power smoothies; develop your own recipes with preferred ingredients. You can pack smoothies with lots of nutritional value and calories by adding powders, yogurt, banana, honey, ice cream, and full fat milk.
- Add cheese, meats, or sour cream to eggs.
- Make breakfast count! Medications don't take effect for 40-50 minutes so this meal is a good time to get some solid nutrition in your child before the appetite becomes suppressed. Don't limit your child to traditional breakfast foods. Sandwiches, leftovers, pizza, steak, even pasta could be eaten for breakfast if these are the foods your child will prefer. You can also read more breakfast ideas in my "Better Breakfast" article on the website.
- Nut butters including, peanut butter, almond butter, sunflower seed butter, and others are a great source of calories. They can be spread on crackers, breads, fruits, and other snack foods.
- Mix cheese, avocados, ground beef, or sour cream to refried beans and eat it with chips, crackers, or tortillas.
- Use mayonnaise, sandwich spreads, and other high calorie condiments when you can in preparing sandwiches and snacks.
- Add avocado slices to sandwiches, and salads. Make guacamole with ingredients your child likes and serve with chips or crackers.
- Serve pasta with meat, meatballs, cheese, or cream sauces.
- Add cheese or butter to vegetables. Squash, for example, can be prepared with butter, brown sugar, and cinnamon.
- Feed your child more potatoes. French fries, tater tots, mashed potatoes with butter and sour cream will provide many calories.
- Make bread or biscuits with butter, honey, cheese, or cream cheese.
- Serve dessert. Many desserts have lots of calories. Ice cream, milk shakes, frozen yogurt parfaits, healthy baked goods such as muffins, oatmeal cookies, and bread with nuts and dried fruit.
- Always use the healthy choices available which means avoiding Trans fats, artificial ingredients and colorings, and additives and preservatives whenever possible.
- Avoid empty calories that are filling like sodas, fruit juices, and candies that spoil the appetite for meal time.