



Why Choose a Heart-Healthy Eating Pattern if You are Underweight?

A body mass index, or BMI, less than 18.5 means you are underweight. Your health care provider can help you figure out your BMI. You can also use a BMI calculator at www.smartbmiccalculator.com. *Some people have a lower body weight naturally and are healthy at this weight.* But if you are underweight from *not eating enough, or from illness or stress*, you may be at risk for health problems. Your health care provider can find out if you have health problems at your check-ups. If you have a low BMI, the goal is to gain weight in a healthy way. Choose high-calorie foods that are also heart-healthy. It may also help if you eat smaller meals and healthy snacks more often. Light physical activity like walking will help your overall health. Light strength-training exercise can protect your bones and muscles. Try the steps below to gain weight in a heart-healthy way.

Tips for Gaining Weight in a Heart-Healthy Way

Start slow and keep a food journal

- Write down what you eat for 3 days
- Look to see where you can add foods to boost calories

Eat meals more often

- Try to eat 5-6 healthy meals and snacks each day
- Make meals with lean protein and low-fat dairy foods, raw or unsalted nuts, whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, and fruits

Eat healthy, high-calorie snacks

- Snack on dried fruit and granola
- Try meal replacement drinks or bars
- Make fruit and veggie smoothies with low-fat plain yogurt, nut butters, and/or avocado



Add healthy fats to meals and snacks

- Use canola oil or extra-virgin olive oil with vegetables, pastas, and salads
- Add avocados to meals and snacks
- Snack on unsalted nuts and seeds and natural nut butters

Save drinks for the end of meals

- Drink liquids at the end of meals to avoid feeling full quickly
- Avoid sugary or low-calorie drinks with little nutrition
- Choose low-fat milk or 100% fruit juice

Be active each day

- Do light aerobic exercises like walking
- Try to do strength training with light weights

Meal and Snack Ideas for Gaining Weight in a Healthy Way



Breakfast – Granola with Plain Yogurt + Berries + Raw or Unsalted Nuts **OR**

Scrambled Egg with 1 oz. Cheese, Whole-Grain Toast with 1 Tbsp. Almond Butter + Fruit

Mid-Morning Snack – Whole-Grain Bread with 1 Tbsp. Peanut Butter **OR**

Avocado Smoothie made with Fruit and Plain Low-Fat Yogurt

Lunch – Grilled Chicken Sandwich on Whole-Grain Bread with Lettuce, Tomato, and Hummus + Fresh Fruit

Mid-Afternoon Snack – Dried Fruit + Raw or Unsalted Nuts or Peanuts

Dinner – Grilled Salmon with Yogurt-Dill Sauce + Wild Rice + Asparagus grilled in Extra-Virgin Olive Oil **OR**

Whole-Wheat Pasta + Ground Turkey Marinara + Mixed Green Salad with Vinaigrette Dressing

Snack – 1 oz. Skim-Milk Mozzarella Cheese Stick + Whole-Grain Crackers + Fresh Fruit **OR** 1 oz. unsalted nuts

A registered dietitian nutritionist can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle, and support you in your journey to a healthful dietary pattern.