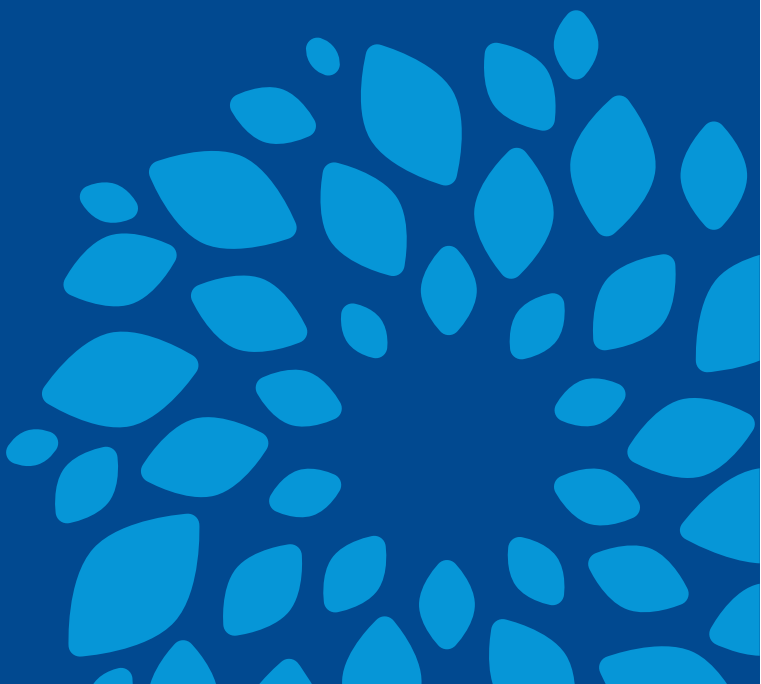




Medication & Cravings



Medication and cravings

It can be difficult to control your weight, especially if you are on medication which can increase your appetite. Some medication can cause you to be thirsty or have a false appetite. These feelings are called cravings. If you eat too many sugary or fatty foods, or drink too many sugary drinks to satisfy these cravings, you will gain weight. Instead of filling up on these foods and drinks, choose from the list below. Over time the cravings will disappear.

Tips to beat the cravings

The best way to beat the cravings is to follow a healthy meal plan. This means having regular healthy meals throughout the day. This will help keep you satisfied and prevent you getting hungry.

Do not skip meals

When meals are skipped, your willpower to resist cravings is lessened and you are more likely to fill up on sugary or fatty foods. Aim to have 3 healthy meals each day, i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Have a breakfast that is high in fibre

Examples are a bowl of All Bran, Weetabix or Porridge and a glass of fruit juice or 2 slices of wholegrain toast with low fat spread and a banana.

Choose foods that have a low glycaemic index. These help to keep you feeling fuller for longer after a meal and should be included where possible into your healthy meals and snacks. Here are some everyday carbohydrates with examples of a lower GI choice.

- Bread: multigrain*, granary*, rye*, seeded*, wholegrain*, oat*, pita bread* e.g. Sliced brown loaf or soda bread.
- Potatoes: New potatoes in their skin, sweet potato.
- Pasta and noodles.
- Rice: Basmati rice, long grain and brown rice.
- Other grains: Bulgur wheat*, barley*, couscous* and quinoa*.
- Breakfast cereals: Porridge, muesli, most oat and bran-based cereals.

If snacking choose healthy snacks

If the cravings are strong and you need to eat, choose something healthy first like a piece of fruit. This may satisfy you and not only will it not cause you to gain weight, it is very good for your overall health.



Use the list below to help you plan your healthy snacks:

- **Yogurts**
Natural Low Fat Yogurt*,
Fromage Frais.
- **Wholemeal crackers with low fat spread and/or sugar free jam**
e.g. Ryvita, Crackers*, Cracottes*.
- **Fruit**
Apple, pear, banana, bunch of grapes, nectarine or a small packet of dried fruit.
- **2 plain biscuits**
e.g. Fig Roll*, Jaffa cakes*, Marietta* or Rich Tea*.
Coffee biscuit available on ward.
- **Cereal bars**
Aim for less than 100 kcals/bar.
- **Small bowl of wholegrain breakfast cereal with low fat milk**
e.g. Weetabix, Porridge, Shredded Wheat*.
- **1 slice of wholemeal bread with low fat spread***
- **Small wholemeal scones***
- **Natural or unsweetened popcorn***
- **Raisins** (1 small bag)
- **Rice cakes***
- **Fruit sorbet***

- **Smoothies**
(Max 200ml cup).
- **Maltana with low fat spread***
Small slice.
- **Brack with low fat spread***
Small slice.
- **A small packet of baked low calorie crisps**
Keep to one or less a day.

Delay the urge to give into a craving by:

- Having a drink of water or a sugar free drink.
- Distract yourself by talking to someone, phoning a friend, watching TV, reading a book, going for a short walk or doing a puzzle - the urge to eat will pass.

Learn to “sit” with the cravings:

- The cravings do lessen and eventually disappear. Being aware that the craving is caused by a false appetite is half the battle.
Knowing this and saying to yourself that it will disappear in time can help you to be strong and avoid giving in to it. If you can resist the cravings for a week or two they will lessen in intensity and eventually disappear.

**Note; the foods listed above may not be available in the hospital setting. Pick what's available whilst an inpatient in hospital and then at home you can increase your choices.*

Some other suggestions to help you manage your weight:

- Keep an eye on your weight - Weigh yourself once a week and record these weights. If you gain 2kg (4½ lbs) or more speak to your mental health professional about this.
- Stock up on ready meals and convenience foods that are easy to prepare for those days that you don't feel like cooking a dinner. Examples are beans, eggs or tinned sardines/mackerel on toast, frozen ready meals or thin based vegetarian pizza.
- Increasing fruit, vegetables and salad in your diet will help reduce the risk of weight gain - aim for 5+ servings a day.
- If you're thirsty stick to low sugar drinks such as sugar free squash, low fat milk or best of all - water!

- Avoid fast foods and takeaways - they are usually high in fat, sugar and salt and are an expensive way to be unhealthy!
- Involve your family and friends - If they know you are trying to manage your weight they might help by:
 - Cooking healthier meals,
 - Not buying sugary/fatty foods for the household,
 - Joining you with your exercise.

Remember!

Healthy eating means having variety in your diet and enjoying your food. Try to have 3 healthy meals each day with 2-3 healthy snacks, like fruit, in-between if hungry. Too much of any type of food can cause weight gain. A little of what you like is okay but try to minimise treats. Ensure an adequate fluid intake of 2 - 2.5 litres per day.

**Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute INDI, <https://www.indi.ie/fact-sheets.html>
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