

The 18 Best Healthy Foods to Gain Weight Fast

For some people, gaining weight or adding muscle can be just as difficult as losing weight is for others.

However, simply adding certain foods to your diet can make your weight gain efforts both healthy and more effective.

Here are 18 of the best foods to help you gain weight or add muscle, the healthy way.



1. Homemade protein smoothies

- Drinking homemade protein smoothies can be a highly nutritious and quick way to gain weight.
- Making your own smoothies is the best way since commercial versions are often full of sugar and lack nutrients. It also gives you full control over the flavour and nutrient content.

- Here are just a few tasty variations you can try. You can combine each with 2 cups (470 mL) of dairy milk or soy milk if you have lactose intolerance. Both have more nutrients and calories than other alternative milks.
 - **Chocolate banana nut shake:** Combine 1 banana, 1 scoop of chocolate whey protein, and 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of peanut or another nut butter.
 - **Vanilla berry shake:** Combine 1 cup (237 mL) of fresh or frozen mixed berries, ice, 1 cup (237 mL) of high protein, full fat Greek yogurt, and 1 scoop of vanilla whey protein.
 - **Chocolate hazelnut shake:** Combine 15 ounces (444 mL) of chocolate milk with 1 scoop of chocolate whey protein, 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of hazelnut butter, and 1 avocado.
 - **Caramel apple shake:** Combine 1 sliced apple, 1 cup (237 mL) of full fat Greek yogurt, 1 scoop of caramel- or vanilla-flavoured whey protein, and 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of sugar-free caramel sauce or flavouring.
 - **Vanilla blueberry shake:** Combine 1 cup (237 mL) of fresh or frozen blueberries, 1 scoop of vanilla whey protein, 1 cup (237 mL) of vanilla Greek yogurt, and sweetener if needed.
 - **Super green shake:** Combine 1 cup (237 mL) of spinach, 1 avocado, 1 banana, 1 cup (237 mL) of pineapple, and 1 scoop of unflavoured or vanilla whey protein.
- All of these smoothies provide around 400–600 calories, along with a high amount of protein and other important vitamins and minerals.

2. Milk

- Milk has been used as a weight gainer or muscle builder for decades.
- It provides a good balance of proteins, carbs, and fats and is a good source of calcium, as well as other vitamins and minerals.
- For those trying to add more muscle, milk is an excellent protein source that provides both casein and whey proteins. Research has even shown it can help you add muscle when combined with weightlifting.

- Additionally, studies have found that milk, or whey and casein combined, can lead to greater mass gain than other protein sources.
- Try drinking one or two glasses of whole milk (149 calories per cup) as a snack, with a meal, or before and after a workout if you're training.
- Milk smoothies are also a delicious way to add milk to your diet. For an easy morning protein boost, try blending up 1 cup of frozen berries, 1 cup of whole milk, 2 teaspoons of honey, and 1 teaspoon of vanilla (about 275 calories).

3. Rice

- Rice is a convenient, low cost carb source to help you gain weight. Just 1 cup (158 grams) of cooked white rice provides 204 calories, 44 grams of carbs, and very little fat.
- Rice is also fairly calorie-dense, meaning you can easily obtain a high amount of carbs and calories from a single serving. This helps you eat more food, especially if you have a poor appetite or get full quickly.
- When you're on the go or in a rush, 2-minute packs of microwavable rice can be easily added to other protein sources and premade meals.
- Another popular method is to prepare a large pot of rice, refrigerate it or freeze individual portions, and then combine it with different proteins and healthy fats for varied meals throughout the week.
- There are many ways to turn relatively bland rice into a taste extravaganza. The easiest way to add taste, calories, and a protein boost is to simply stir in some of these ingredients after you have cooked your rice:
 - butter and Parmesan cheese
 - broccoli and cheese
 - scrambled eggs
 - toasted sesame seeds, peanuts, or cashews
- Another way to boost taste and calories is to top your rice with a sauce like curry, pesto, or alfredo. You can buy these sauces ready-made if you're pressed for time.

- A rice dish can easily become a whole meal. Try this wild rice and chicken kale for a healthy lunch (400 calories per serving).
- You can also stir up your own healthy take on the Chinese takeout favorite, fried rice, with this vegetable-tofu “fried” rice dish — which is actually baked.

4. Nuts and nut butters

- Nuts and nut butters are perfect choices if you’re looking to gain weight.
- Just one small handful of raw almonds (1/4 cup) contains 170 calories, 6 grams of protein, 4 grams of fiber, and 15 grams of healthy fats.
- Since nuts are very calorie-dense, just two handfuls per day with a meal or as a snack can quickly add hundreds of calories.
- You can add nut butters to a variety of snacks or dishes, such as smoothies, yogurts, and crackers, to turn them into a high calorie snack in no time.
- For a quick pick-me-up, try this peanut butter banana smoothie, with only three ingredients (270 calories, using whole milk). If you have a peanut allergy, substitute another nut butter.
- However, make sure you pick 100 percent nut butters with no added sugar or extra oils. Or better yet, make your own from this homemade almond butter recipe. It’s easy to make and easy on your wallet, too.

5. Red meats

- Red meats are probably one of the best muscle-building foods available.
- For example, 6 ounces (170 grams) of steak contains around 5 grams of leucine.
- Leucine is the key amino acid your body needs to stimulate muscle protein synthesis and add new muscle tissue. It also contains 456 calories and nearly 49 grams of protein.
- In addition to this, red meats are one of the best natural sources of dietary creatine, which is possibly the world’s best muscle-building supplement.

- Consider choosing fattier cuts, which provide more calories than leaner meats, helping you take in extra calories and add weight.
- In one study, 100 older women added 6 ounces (170 grams) of red meat to their diets and performed resistance training 6 days a week for 6 weeks.
- The women gained lean mass, had an 18 percent increase in strength, and had an increase in the important muscle-building hormone IGF-1.
- Both lean and fatty meats are a great source of protein, though fatty meat provides more calories, which can help you gain weight. One of the best-known fatty beef dishes is brisket.
- Brisket is known for being time-consuming to prepare, but it can be much easier if you own a slow cooker.
- Start this brisket recipe in the morning and you'll have a nutritious dinner waiting for you in the evening — approximately 300 calories per 3-ounce (85 grams) serving.

6. Potatoes and starches

- Potatoes and other starchy foods are a very easy and cost-effective way to add in extra calories.
- Try to choose one of these healthy sources of starchy carbs:
 - quinoa
 - oats
 - corn
 - buckwheat
 - potatoes and sweet potatoes
 - squash
 - winter root vegetables
 - beans and legumes
- Not only do potatoes and other starches add carbs and calories to help you gain weight — they also increase your muscle glycogen stores.
- Glycogen is the predominant fuel source for most sports and activities.

- Many of these carb sources also provide important nutrients and fibre, as well as resistant starch, which can help nourish your gut bacteria.
- With sweet potatoes, you can try out one of the current Instagram trends: sweet potato toast. Prep takes only minutes. Start by washing, drying, and thinly slicing a medium-sized sweet potato, then toast it to your liking either in a toaster or a toaster oven.
- Then you add your favourite toppings. For example, slather it with mashed avocado and top with a fried egg (300 calories per serving). You've got yourself a perfect breakfast or post-workout snack.
- Quinoa is actually a seed that's prepared and eaten like a grain. It can be cooked and eaten on its own, added to soups, or made into flour and used in bread, drinks, or porridge.
- Quinoa is superior to many other grains in that it's a complete protein, meaning it contains all nine amino acids that our bodies cannot make on their own. It's also high in protein, minerals, and B vitamins.
- Get a healthy dose of both sweet potatoes and quinoa in this hearty lunch recipe for quinoa and roasted sweet potato bowls (336 calories per serving).
- Other ways to add calories to complex carbs include:
 - adding sour cream to potatoes
 - adding grated cheese to quinoa or mashed potatoes
 - adding healthy fats like olive or avocado oil to roast your vegetables
 - adding sliced olives as a topping
 - adding hummus to whole grain bread or crackers
 - using dairy or soy milk instead of water in your oatmeal or other hot grains

7. Salmon and oily fish

- Like red meat, salmon and oily fish are excellent sources of protein and important healthy fats.
- Out of all the nutrients that salmon and oily fish provide, omega-3 fatty acids are among the most significant and well known.
- They offer numerous benefits for your health and help fight diseases.

- Just one 6-ounce (170-gram) fillet of deboned wild sockeye salmon provides around 250 calories and 12 grams of healthy fats. The same serving packs 37 grams of high quality protein, helping you build muscle or gain weight.
- You can prepare salmon in a variety of ways: steamed, sautéed, smoked, grilled, baked, or poached. You can also try smoked salmon or even eat raw salmon in sushi and sashimi.
- Fresh or frozen salmon often has a slightly higher price tag, but canned salmon is a quick and inexpensive option. Almost all canned salmon is wild rather than farmed, giving it top marks for nutrition.
- Consider these convenient, healthy ways of adding salmon to your diet:
- Try giving your usual “tuna” salad a new spin, using canned salmon instead.
- Make a Cobb salad substituting canned salmon for the traditional chicken, then add bacon, hard-boiled egg, avocado, lettuce, and tomatoes.
- Give smoked salmon a try. Slather cream cheese on whole grain bread or crackers, add smoked salmon, and top with cucumber, tomato slices, or capers.
- Make a salmon salad with leafy greens, asparagus, and some full fat plain Greek yogurt, mayonnaise, or sour cream.

8. Protein supplements

- Taking protein supplements is a common strategy for athletes and bodybuilders who want to gain weight. There are many types available, including whey, soy, egg, and pea protein.
- Whey protein supplements and mass gainers (supplements that can help you gain muscle mass) can be very easy and cost-effective strategies to gain weight, especially when combined with strength training.
- Some people think whey protein is unhealthy or unnatural, but this isn’t the case. Whey protein is made from dairy and has been shown to help improve health markers and reduce the risk of disease.
- Protein supplements may be even more important if you’re also training since your daily protein requirements increase.

- Like meats and other animal products, whey protein contains all the essential amino acids required to stimulate muscle growth.
- You can use it before or after your workout and at any other point during the day.
- The easiest way to add protein powder into your diet is with a protein smoothie, especially for breakfast. That gives you the rest of the day to add in nutritious meals and snacks to make sure you get a balanced nutrient intake.
- Generally, a smoothie that you make yourself will be more nutritious than buying one that's ready-made, which may have added sugar and flavourings.
- Try this basic whey shakes recipe to start your day off with a high energy breakfast. For even more protein, try adding in peanut butter, almond butter, flaxseeds, or chia seeds.
- Unflavoured whey protein can be added to dishes such as soups, mashed potatoes, and oatmeal to increase protein content.
- Shop online for protein supplements.

9. Dried fruit

- Dried fruit is a high calorie snack that also provides antioxidants and micronutrients.
- You can get many different types of dried fruit, and they all have a naturally high sugar content. This makes them great for gaining weight, especially since they're convenient to eat and taste great.
- While many people think fruits lose most of their nutrients when dried, this isn't the case. Dried fruits contain lots of fibre and most of their vitamins and minerals remain intact.
- Try combining some dried fruit with a protein source, such as cuts of meat, cheese, or a whey protein shake. They also mix well with nuts and full fat plain Greek yogurt, providing a blend of healthy fats, protein, and other key nutrients.
- Dates are nutritious, full of fibre, and high in antioxidants. They're also versatile and simple to prepare as a high calorie snack. Just two Medjool dates on their own provide about 130 calories.

- Try filling dates with nut butter, cream cheese, or even cooked grains like rice or quinoa. Add one or two dates to smoothies, sauces, and dressings for a touch of sweetness.

10. Whole grain bread

- Whole grain breads are another good carb source to help you gain weight.
- You can make some very simple, high calorie, and well-balanced meals by combining bread with protein sources such as eggs, meat, and cheese.
- When purchasing bread, aim for natural whole grain and seeded breads. Healthier versions, such as Ezekiel bread, are available in most grocery stores.
- Sandwiches are one of the easiest, most versatile, and portable meals for helping you put on weight. Their ingredients are limited only by your imagination: meats, cheese, veggies, nut butter spreads, avocado, and more.
- Try one of these sandwich recipes. You'll find everything from the basic Reuben to healthy wraps to several imaginative takes on the timeless grilled cheese.
- Sourdough bread has become increasingly popular during the pandemic period and for good reason. It's one of the most nutritious and satisfying breads.
- During the pandemic, many are learning how to make sourdough starters. Sourdough bread has just three simple ingredients: flour, water, and salt. One slice weighing 2 ounces (56 g) will give you about 160 calories.
- The live good bacteria in sourdough feeds bacteria in the gut, which can strengthen your immune system.

11. Avocados

- Avocados are loaded with healthy fats.
- Unlike other whole fruits, avocados are fairly calorie-dense and therefore a great food to help you gain weight.
- Just one large avocado provides around 322 calories, 29 grams of fat, and 14 grams of fibre.

- Avocados are also high in vitamins, minerals, and various beneficial plant compounds.
- Try adding avocados to your main meals and other dishes such as omelettes or sandwiches.
- One of the most popular and easiest ways of enjoying avocado is on avocado toast. Just mash up some avocado and spread it on your toast. It's that easy!
- Other delicious ways to enjoy the versatile avocado include:
 - guacamole
 - salads
 - soups
 - wraps
 - sandwiches
 - fries
 - sushi
 - as a topping
 - as a mayonnaise substitute
 - grilled
 - baked
 - pickled

12. Healthy cereals

- Healthy cereals can be an excellent source of carbs, calories, and nutrients.
- While you should avoid processed, high sugar cereals, healthier forms, such as oatmeal cooked with whole milk, can be a great carb source to add to your diet.
- You'll get about 130 calories from a 1 cup serving of cooked oatmeal, plus the calories in any whole milk or toppings you add.
- Consider topping your hot oats, overnight oats, or full fat Greek yogurt with:
 - nuts
 - dried fruit
 - chia seeds

- fresh berries
 - homemade granola
- Grain-based cereals and oats also contain beneficial nutrients such as fiber and healthy antioxidants.
- When purchasing cereals, focus on these healthy choices:
 - oats
 - granola
 - multi-grains
 - bran
- Ezekiel brand
- Make sure to read the label and avoid cereals with excess added sugar. Choose those with the most fibre when possible.
- Granola is a calorie-dense mixture of cereals, dried fruits, and nuts. It's rich in protein, fibre, and micronutrients. Just one-half cup of granola can supply between 200–300 calories.
- You may want to try making your own granola to avoid the added sugars in some store-bought versions.

13. Cereal bars

- Some of the healthier cereal bars on the market can be a great high calorie snack when you're on the go. Most bars average between 150–200 calories.
- They're also a good choice before or after a training session since they tend to contain a mix of slow- and fast-digesting carbs.
- As a snack or meal on the go, try combining a cereal bar with other protein sources, such as full fat Greek yogurt, boiled eggs, cold cuts of meat, or a protein shake.
- While some cereal bars are healthy, many others have added sugar, oils, salt, and preservatives that are not as desirable. You may want to try making your own bars. It's a lot easier than you might think.
- Try these recipes to make your own homemade cereal bars. Often, you'll need only a few ingredients, and you might even have them in your pantry now.

- But if you're not handy in the kitchen, it's possible to find healthy store-bought cereal bars. Just be sure to stick to bars made from healthy whole grains and other healthy ingredients, such as dried fruits, nuts, or seeds.

14. Dark chocolate

- High quality dark chocolate provides a ton of antioxidants and health benefits.
- Dark chocolate with at least 70 percent cacao (the seed from which chocolate is made) is said to help regulate stress hormones and blood sugar levels.
- It may also help reduce the risk of heart disease, some cancers, inflammation, stress, and type 2 diabetes.
- Like other high fat foods, dark chocolate has a very high calorie density, meaning it's very easy to get many calories from it.
- Each 100-gram (3.5-ounce) bar with 60–75 percent cacao solids has around 600 calories and is packed with micronutrients and health-promoting compounds, including fibre, magnesium, and antioxidants.
- There are many ways to enjoy dark chocolate in addition to eating it straight.
- Garnish your morning cereal with it, put a few curls on top of a fruit plate, or make some steaming-hot drinking (or sipping) chocolate like the Parisians do.
- You can make healthy chocolate desserts, like energy bites, no-guilt chocolate truffles, or chocolate peanut butter avocado pudding.
- Supermarket aisles are crowded with many types and qualities of dark chocolate. Be sure to choose a high quality one with at least 70 percent cacao.
- Check out this guide for expert buying tips.

15. Cheese

- Cheese has been a staple food for centuries.
- Like dark chocolate, it's high in calories and fats. Just 1 ounce of cheddar cheese (28 grams) has 110 calories and 7 grams of protein. One ounce is smaller than you might think. It's about the size of a pair of dice.

- Since cheese is tasty, you can incorporate it into most dishes and easily add several hundred extra calories.
- Cheese is available in countless varieties, from creamed, to soft, to hard. Check out this list of healthy cheeses to find out which ones suit your palate best.
- Many cheeses are high in cholesterol and saturated fat. Like most high calorie foods, cheeses of all kinds are best consumed in moderation.
- One of the best-loved cheese dishes is mac and cheese. It goes down easily, even if you don't have much of an appetite. Try this mac and cheese recipe for a healthy version of the perennial favourite.
- Oh, and we can't forget to mention the grilled cheese sandwich. Now and then, on whole grain bread or English muffins, who can resist our childhood favourite?

16. Whole eggs

- Eggs are one of the healthiest muscle-building foods on the planet. They provide a great combination of high-quality proteins and healthy fats. Each large raw egg weighing 2 ounces, with shell (50 grams), has about 74 calories.
- It's also very important to eat the whole egg. In fact, almost all of the beneficial nutrients in eggs are found in the yolk.
- As long as you don't have an intolerance to eggs, there's no need to limit your egg consumption — you can easily eat three eggs per day if you want.
- In fact, many athletes or bodybuilders will eat six or more daily.
- Eggs are very versatile and can be cooked in a number of ways, including boiling, poaching, frying, baking, and scrambling.
- Use them in:
 - salads
 - casseroles
 - sandwiches
 - baked egg muffins
 - bread substitutes
 - desserts like egg custard and crème brûlée (in moderation, of course)

- Omelettes are a favourite meal any time of day. You can add in meats, veggies, and cheese, then top with sour cream and avocado for a high calorie extravaganza.
- Try these recipes for a great egg breakfast (and we won't tell if you have them for lunch or dinner).

17. Full fat yogurt

- Full fat Greek yogurt is another healthy and convenient snack. It has a great nutritional profile, including a well-balanced mix of protein, carbs, and fat.
- Each 6-ounce serving of plain, whole milk yogurt will give you 165 calories and 15 grams of protein, and that's before you add all your delicious combos and toppings.
- There are numerous high calorie snacks and healthy weight-gain recipes based on yogurt. Here are a few:
 - **Yogurt and fruit:** Combine 1–2 cups of yogurt with fresh or dried fruit. You can also add nuts, seeds, honey, granola, dark chocolate, or coconut flakes.
 - **Chocolate peanut butter pudding:** Mix 1–2 cups of yogurt with 100 percent cocoa powder, peanut or any nut butter, and a sweetener such as stevia, honey, or sugar. You can also add a scoop of whey for more protein.
 - **Yogurt parfait:** Combine 1–2 cups of yogurt with granola and mixed berries in layers to create a tasty and well-balanced breakfast or healthy snack.
 - **Smoothies:** Full fat Greek yogurt is an excellent addition to almost any smoothie to increase the protein content and give it a creamier, milkshake-like thickness.
- Try whole milk Greek yogurt for even more calories, less sugar, and almost twice the protein of regular yogurt. Greek yogurt is strained and has a thicker consistency. This makes it great for toppings or as a delicious snack on its own.

- Choosing the best yogurt among the many selections at the grocery store can be challenging. Read the label and avoid those with additives like sugar, thickeners, or preservatives.
- Look for buying tips [here](#).

18. Healthy fats and oils

- Healthy fats and oils are some of the most calorie-dense foods on the planet.
- Simply adding 1 tablespoon of olive oil (15 mL) of oil to sauces, salads, and during cooking can quickly add 120 calories.
- Healthy oils include:
 - extra virgin olive oil
 - avocado oil
 - coconut oil
- One trendier way of getting healthy fats is having butter coffee for breakfast or as a high calorie snack. Blend up a cup of brewed coffee with coconut oil and unsalted butter until it looks like a foamy latte.