

## Bulking Up Healthfully

Many of us have been influenced by **advertisements, the media, and our peers** to think that muscular is good and ripped is better. In this environment, it is important to reflect on our **reasons** for wanting to gain weight and what an **appropriate weight goal** should be.

### What you must know to gain weight:

- Your body has a **setpoint** – a predetermined weight range that is appropriate for your body; it may not be your favorite number, but you can't healthfully change it.
- The body is a **calculator** – calories in must be calibrated with calories out.
- **Don't compare** your food intake to friends – if people tease you about how much you eat, tell them a limo needs more gas than most other cars.

### Hallmarks of a **healthy sports nutrition weight gain** eating plan:

- It should identify your personal "**calorie budget**" (see the handout "*How Much Food Do I Need?*") and add about 20%.
- The plan should rely on **real food**, not powders and supplements, which are expensive and of dubious scientific merit. It's a better use of your time to develop smart eating habits you can sustain for the long haul than to spend your hard-earned money on expensive supplements.
- Eating lots of **extra protein does not build muscle** and can be unhealthy for the kidneys. The best gauge for knowing if you are eating the right balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat is if you have sustained energy for workouts and good mental focus.
- An eating plan should **not** be confused with an opportunity to express control, rigidity, or self-denial.

### How to **boost your calories**:

- Eat an extra snack, like a peanut butter sandwich at bedtime.
- Eat larger-than-normal portions at mealtimes.
- Eat higher-calorie foods:
  - Healthy fats like olive oil, avocados, or almonds are a good choice
  - Dense cereals like granola or muesli add more calories than puffy cereals like Cheerios
  - Fruit juices can also add calories

### For help with a **personalized eating plan** at MIT:

- Contact **MIT Medical** at 253-1546 and ask for an appointment with the **nutritionist**. The nutritionist will ask you about what you currently eat and help you make healthy changes. Tell the nutritionist that you are interested in a sports nutrition food plan for weight gain.

Get tips on making healthy behavior changes and staying motivated, as well as information about eating and body image concerns, from the **Center for Health Promotion and Wellness** at MIT Medical:

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Adapted from *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*

Questions about this topic? Contact Julie Banda at the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness

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