



The Skinny on Gaining Weight *How to Add Muscle to Your Frame*

With more than 63% of American adults now weighing in as obese or overweight, most of us are looking for ways to shed those extra pounds. For others, however, it can be a big challenge to keep weight *on*.

An estimated 1.8% of Americans are underweight, with common causes ranging from genetics and high metabolism, to chronic illness, stress, depression, and side effects from medication. Being a little underweight isn't a problem, but those who are extremely lean tend to have weaker immune systems, lower muscle mass, and weaker hair, nails, and skin.

The Healthy Way to Gain Weight

According to the American Dietetic Association, the secret to healthy weight gain is to take in as many nutrient-rich calories as possible. Mayo Clinic nutritionists recommend the following dietary guidelines for those trying to gain weight healthily:

- **Eat more frequently.** Eat 5-6 small meals throughout the day instead of 2-3 large meals.
- **Eat nutrient-rich foods.** Favor whole-grain breads, pastas and cereals; fruits and veggies; low-fat dairy products like skim milk; lean protein sources like fish; and nuts and seeds.
- **Drink good fluids.** Avoid diet soda, coffee, and tea. Instead, favor natural juices, smoothies, and healthy shakes. Rather than drinking at mealtimes, try drinking fluids either 30 minutes before or after meals (otherwise, you might get full too quickly).
- **Eat calorie-dense snacks.** Between meals, reach for nuts, low-fat cheese, dried fruits, peanut butter, and avocado slides. You can also have a bedtime snack.
- **Enjoy healthy sweets.** Indulge your sweet tooth in tasty treats that offer nutrients, like low-fat yogurt, granola bars, and bran muffins.

Exercise can play an important component in gaining weight as well. Regular exercise, particularly strength training, will help to build your muscles and stimulate your appetite. Try lifting weights several times a week and incorporating resistance training exercises like squats, lunges, and push-ups into your routine. Remember to train your whole body—the more muscles you use, the more you'll stimulate muscle-growth all day long!