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What to eat to gain weight fast for skinny guys

If you're a self-described "skinny" person trying to put on weight, you probably feel like a second class citizen when you're researching on the Internet. Most fitness information is geared towards fat loss. Let's talk about the basics of healthy weight gain. My friend Tynan approached me one day asking about fitness. We've talked about how fitness success depends heavily on habit, which is why it was surprising when Tynan, a expert and prolific author on habits, came to me looking for advice.Many people tend to be anxious about their fitness routine. They want to optimize everything, which Read more "No matter how much I eat, I can't put on weight. Seriously, I went on a cruise one time... they're all you can eat, so I just stuffed myself silly. I put on about five pounds by the end, but within a few weeks I was back to my starting weight." To people who are predisposed to being overweight (like myself), this sounds almost like some voodoo, foreign magic. But naturally skinny folks have experienced this throughout their entire life. You'll find the particular fitness skill that's most important to you depends on your starting point and your goals. While habit is one of the most important skills for people who are losing weight, naturally lean folks will rely more heavily on the "knowledge" facet. Let's see why.As a fitness coach and the co-founder of Fitocracy, I've been exposed to the success stories and...Read moreWhy It's So Difficult for Skinny People to Put On Weight In the late 1960's, a group of researchers went to the Vermont State Prison and asked for volunteers. The researchers sought to overfeed prisoners with a normal body mass index (i.e. not classified as overweight) until they increased their body weight by 25%, and then study the impact of weight gain. Simple, right? It should have been, except for one astonishing fact: some prisoners could not gain weight, no matter how much they were overfed. One participant increased his caloric consumption up to 10,000 calories per day and still could not increase his body weight more than 18%. When the experiment concluded, the prisoners had no problem returning to their original weight. This research inspired a recent BBC documentary (available on YouTube) that corroborated the prisoners'—and Tynan's—experiences. Naturally skinny people seem to be biologically programmed to stay at a given weight. Here are some of the reasons that weight gain was so difficult:Train. Don't Exercise What does it mean to gain weight in a "healthy" manner? We asked Dr. Spencer Nadolsky, an osteopathic physician that specializes in helping obese patients. Dr. Nadolsky says: One can put on weight in a healthy manner if the weight is lean mass. Body fat percentage is a much better indicator than BMI when it comes to your capacity to store muscular glycogen, or glucose stored within your muscles. This glucose is stored within water, further leading to an increase in healthy weight. Luckily, there are some pretty good workouts available that focus on progressive overloading. Some examples are: Back to Tynan's story. I put him on a custom workout focusing on progressive overload and he immediately found that for the first time, he actually retained the weight he gained. Training was only one part of the equation, however. Changing his diet around was the bigger challenge.Eat More Calories If you have the training part of the equation down pat, and your weight isn't going up, then you'll simply have to consume more calories. This is the biggest problem that I've seen with hardgainers—some people have great difficulty eating enough calories to increase lean mass. From Lyle McDonald's Body Recomposition blog: Outside of poor training (which can be either too much or too little), not eating enough is the number one mistake I see most trainees making who can't gain muscle. This is true even of individuals who swear up, down and sideways that they eat a ton but no matter what they can't gain weight. Almost invariably, when you track these big eaters, they really aren't eating that much. Research has routinely shown that overweight individuals tend to under-estimate food intake (e.g. they think they are eating much less than they actually are) but in my experience 'hardgainers' are doing the opposite: vastly overestimating how much they are actually eating in a given day, or over the span of a week. Similarly, although such trainees may get in a lot of food acutely, invariably they often compensate for those high-caloric intakes by lowering calories on the following day (or even in the same day). So while they might remember that one big-assed lunch meal, they won't remember how they ate almost nothing later in the day because they got full. Remember, your body is constantly trying to maintain homeostasis. Even if you focus on eating more calories around breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you may unintentionally reduce your caloric intake during other times without realizing. Find out how many calories you need in order to stay the same weight every day, and then increase your calories by 15%. You can do this easily by adding calorically dense foods into your diet, such as adding a few glasses of whole milk into your diet every day or a tablespoon or two of olive oil into your meals.Being healthy is simple, right? 'Eat less, move more.' That's easy to say, but practicality is one...Read more Here's a list of calorically dense foods that are easy to incorporate into your diet.Olive oil (130 calories per tablespoon)Peanut butter (190 calories for two tablespoons)Dark chocolate (250 calories for ¼ of a bar)Avocadoes (230 calories for one whole avocado)Whole milk (200 calories for two cups)Raisins (250 calories in half a cup) You'll also need to make sure that you get 0.75g of protein per pound that you weigh. A 120 lb male, for example, would need to get at least 90g of protein. I had Tynan eat the same meals repeatedly for the first few weeks in order to ensure that he was in a caloric surplus (i.e. consuming more calories than he burned every day). This was difficult at first, and many times he had to force himself to eat. If this sounds unnecessarily difficult, remember that folks who want to lose weight have are just as uncomfortable eating less than they desire; you're just approaching this from the opposite end of the spectrum. The result? Within a year, Tynan had put on 20 pounds while maintaining the same waist measurements.Where to Go From Here So, with that in mind, let's summarize what you need to do in order to put on weight:Pick a strength regimen that emphasizes progressive overload. The exact program doesn't matter too much. Just stick to something.Figure out your "maintenance calories," the amount of calories that you need in order to maintain the same weight, then increase this amount by 15%. You can calculate your maintenance calories by logging your daily food intake (assuming you have been the same weight for a while) or using an online calculator like this (use the body fat percentage option for more accurate results).Remember that you might need to force yourself to eat even when you're not hungry. You can do this through calorically dense foods, such as olive oil. Adding just two tablespoons of olive oil to your meals will net you 250 calories more.Make sure to consume at least 0.75 grams of protein for every pound that you weigh. You can consume more, but it might not do anything if you are on a caloric surplus. (Note: We have previously recommended 1g per pound of target body weight. While this is true on a caloric deficit where additional protein may prevent a loss in lean mass, protein is less important on a caloric surplus.)Track your weight and waist measurements weekly. If you find that your waist measurements are increasing too quickly, lower your caloric intake. Anecdotally, the best thing about being a "skinny" person who can't put on weight is that they tend to stay lean. This means that with a changes to your diet and training, you can sport a lean, muscular physique. Just don't show it off to your friends like me who are naturally on the chubby side or you'll be "that guy" (or girl). Images by ra2studio (Shutterstock), xiklima, Tom Pumphret, and isafmedia.Vitals is a new blog from Lifehacker all about heath and fitness. Follow us on Twitter here. During cancer treatment, you may find it hard to maintain your weight. Some people lose weight. Others gain weight. Slight increases in weight during cancer treatment are usually not a problem. But if you gain too much weight, it can affect your health. Weight gain is more common with some cancers and some treatments than others. For instance, more than half of people with breast cancer gain weight during their treatment. Research shows that too much weight gain during treatment is linked to a poorer chance of recovery. Being overweight before treatment begins can also increase the risk of health problems. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart problems. Talking about your weight with your doctor is important, but it can be hard or stressful for some people. Some people feel ashamed about their weight or weight gain. Some people have even experienced discrimination because of their weight. Weight gain can be a side effect of your cancer treatment. It is important to talk to your health care team if you notice changes in your weight, eating habits, or bloating. This will help them find the best support for you. What cancer treatments can cause weight gain? Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, steroid treatment, and hormone treatments can lead to weight gain in different ways. Chemotherapy. Chemotherapy uses drugs to destroy cancer cells. Chemotherapy can lead to weight gain by: Causing the body to hold on to excess fluid, called edema. Causing fatigue, making it harder to exercise. Increasing nausea that improves by eating more food. Triggering intense food cravings. Lowering your metabolism. Metabolism is the rate that the body uses energy. When your metabolism is low, you burn less calories, which can make you gain weight. Causing menopause, which also slows down your metabolism. Steroid medications. Steroids are prescribed during cancer treatment for several reasons. This type of medication can reduce symptoms of inflammation, such as swelling and pain. They can treat nausea. And they can be used as a treatment for cancer itself, such as for multiple myeloma. A common side effect of steroids is weight gain. Steroids can lead to weight gain by: Increasing your appetite and making you eat more. Decreasing muscle mass, called wasting. Increasing fat tissue in the abdomen, neck, face, or other areas with long-term use. Hormonal therapy. Hormonal therapy may be used to treat certain cancers, including breast, prostate, testicular, and uterine cancers. This type of medication can decrease the amount of certain hormones, such as estrogen, progesterone, or testosterone. Hormones in the body are used for different functions. Decreases in hormone levels can increase fat, decrease muscle, and make it harder to burn calories. How can weight gain during cancer treatment be managed? If you notice changes in your weight, eating habits, or bloating, let your health care team know so they can help you. Relieving symptoms and side effects is an important part of your overall cancer care and treatment. This type of care is called palliative care or supportive care. Before starting any kind of diet or changing your eating habits, talk with a member of your health care team. You may find it helpful to talk with a registered dietitian (RD). They will help you find the possible cause for your weight gain and the best way to manage it. An RD can also provide nutritional guidelines or a customized diet plan. General suggestions about good nutrition during cancer treatment include: Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit fat, sugar, and refined flour. Drink plenty of water. Use healthier cooking methods whenever possible. Regular physical activity can also be helpful during and after cancer treatment. Check with your doctor before starting a new type of exercise or increasing your physical activity. Try different physical activities, such as walking or bicycling, to find one that you enjoy and will do regularly. Explore exercise classes designed for people diagnosed with cancer, either in-person or online. Try strength-building exercises. These can be especially helpful if you have lost muscle. It is important to talk with your cancer care team regularly about your overall physical and mental health, including how to manage the stress and strong emotions that cancer causes. How can weight gain from fluid retention be managed? Fluid retention or edema is swelling caused by the buildup of fluid in the body. If you have edema, you might feel like your clothes, rings, or shoes are too tight. People with edema can also have less flexibility in their hands, elbows, wrists, fingers, or legs. Swollen arms or legs, especially around the wrists or ankles, are also a sign of edema. The fluid buildup collects under the skin, so your skin might feel puffy or stiff. Pressing on your skin might leave small indentations. Talk to your health care team about any of these symptoms so they can diagnose and treat edema. Some of the ways edema can be managed include: Medication. Your doctor can prescribe a diuretic to remove excess water. Lower the amount of salt in your diet. Avoid standing for long periods. Elevate your feet as often as possible. Avoid crossing your legs, which restricts blood flow. Weigh yourself at the same time every day to keep track of changes. This can help your health care team see any fluctuations in your weight that might be caused by edema. Bring this log with you to appointments for your health care team to evaluate. Avoid tight clothing and footwear. Ask your health care team if wearing support or compression socks may help. Questions to ask your health care team Can this cancer or its treatment cause weight gain? Can my cancer treatment cause edema? What are ways I can track my weight during cancer treatment? Who should I tell if I notice changes in my weight? Is there an oncology dietitian and/or other specialists that I can talk with about making food choices and my exercise routine? Are there certain exercises I should avoid due to my diagnosis or its treatment? Who can I talk with if I need help coping with stress or other emotional effects of cancer? Related Resources Body Weight and Cancer Risk Managing Physical Side Effects

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