

As a teenager your body is going through many physical changes. You now have more independence and freedom to choose your own foods, so it is important to understand which foods will not only allow your body to grow and develop but will also help you to feel better and have more energy.

Healthy Eating for Teenagers with Barth Syndrome



Top Tips for Healthy Eating

- Eat breakfast! Your body will have used up all its energy stores overnight and will start to dip into your muscle stores for energy if you don't refuel in the morning.
- Have protein at every meal. There's a lot to choose from – and not just meat, chicken and fish. Protein is also found in milk, yoghurt, cheese, nuts, nut butters, beans, eggs, lentils, soya and quorn.
- Have carbohydrate at every meal and add in lower GI foods where you can.
- Have three servings of dairy foods a day. A glass of milk, one yoghurt and a small matchbox size of cheese each count as one serving.
- Have fruit and vegetables every day. Fruit is a great snack – blitz frozen fruit with some milk for an after-school smoothie or team up with a handful of nuts for extra protein.

What Your Body Needs

Usually boys start to grow taller after the age of 12 years and between 14 and 15 years your friends will really shoot up in height. This growth spurt happens much later in Barth Syndrome (around the age of 18 years) so during your teenage years you will look smaller than your friends, although you will probably catch them up in the end!

Because you are growing slower and may be doing less sport and activity than your friends your body needs less energy. Your portion sizes are likely to be quite a bit smaller - maybe even half the amount you see your friends eating; this is normal.

Keeping to a healthy weight will help you to feel better and have more energy. The best foods to eat are those that supply your body with slow release energy and also keep your muscles strong. Meals should include both protein and carbohydrate. Choosing carbohydrates that provide slow released energy – those with a lower glycaemic index (GI), will keep your blood glucose stores topped up for longer. Choosing low GI carbohydrates can also reduce the amount of extra energy your body stores as fat.



Sometimes you may struggle to eat enough or find you can only eat certain foods. Try to avoid relying on snack foods, crisps and sugary drinks to keep you going. Keep a balance of carbohydrate and protein at meal times even if you can only manage small amounts.

Keep hydrated with plenty of water; try adding a splash of fruit juice or fruit slices for flavor. Choose diet versions of fizzy drinks and avoid sugary energy drinks. The best drink to have after activity or sport is skimmed milk as this replenishes muscles too.

Snack wisely. One packet of crisps a day – maximum!

Here are some healthy meal ideas



Breakfast

Swap your cereal for one of these low GI cereals, or start by mixing your usual cereal together with a small amount of these. Make sure you drink the milk too for a protein boost. Add a little fruit like raisins, strawberries or bananas for some sweetness.

- All Bran, Sultana Bran, Porridge, Special K

If you like toast on a morning choose granary bread and top with some protein

- Eggs, baked beans, bacon, cheese, peanut butter, cream cheese.

If eating early is really hard what about a protein packed drink?

- Experiment with milk or yoghurt based smoothies.

Can't face anything at all?

- A glass of fruit juice and take an oatly or nutty cereal bar or some buttered raisin bread for later. Just not too much later!

Packed Lunch

Swap white bread sandwiches for granary, multigrain, sourdough, wholemeal stoneground bread or whole-wheat tortilla wrap or a try a cold pasta salad.

Add some protein in – turkey, ham, beef, pork, chicken, salmon, tuna, prawn, eggs, cheese, cream cheese spread, or hummus.

Top up with salad - grated carrot, tomatoes, crunchy lettuce, sweetcorn, chopped peppers. Start with small amounts and build up – one is always better than none!

Add in extra flavor – spice up your lunch with pickles, onions, chilli sauce.

Pack some nuts and a squeezey yoghurt, or fruit.

If having crisps choose low fat / baked crisps.



Evening Meals

The evening family meal is a great place to start to add in lower GI carbohydrate foods as this is healthy way of eating for all the family. There are lots of great recipes and books available but to start with try making the following simple changes:

- Add chick-peas or lentils into curries
- Add lentils or beans into mince dishes such as chilli, bolognese, shepherd's pie
- Use new potatoes or add some sweet potatoes into mashed white potatoes. Swap chips for sweet potato wedges and sprinkle with herbs or paprika for extra flavor.
- Use basmati rice and add a little wholegrain rice in for extra nutrients and a nutty flavor
- Vegetables (and most fruit) are low GI so add these in where possible

Evening snacking

Make what you eat before bedtime count – particularly if you find eating breakfast tricky. It should contain both carbohydrate and protein, so a bowl of cereal with milk, a yoghurt and fruit or a slice of low GI toast with your favourite protein are great choices.