MAST CELL ACTION

Gaining Weight on a Low Histamine Diet

Nourishing Health and Happiness with MCAS

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Patient Information Forum



Registered Charity Number 1164917

Disclaimers

Trigger warning - this document is about food and contains images of food.

We recognise that many of the images in this guide contain foods that are restricted on low histamine diets. The images are from stock photos and do not exactly reflect a low histamine diet. We have done our best to reduce references to high-histamine foods wherever possible.

Everyone with MCAS is different, and this is general information, not tailored to your individual needs. This resource is intended to be used alongside support from a qualified health professional. Please seek advice from your medical practitioner or dietitian for specific dietary guidance.

We hope you will be confident to adapt the guidance and recipes for your circumstances, and swap out foods that you are not able to tolerate for others that you are.

This sheet is designed for adults with Mast Cell Activation Syndrome. The nutritional needs of children and teenagers will differ, and the nutritional needs of individuals with specific medical conditions will vary.

If your diet is very limited and you feel that you are struggling to get enough nutrients in your diet or have a specific medical condition that may have specific dietary needs, then please ensure you seek individualised dietary advice from a dietitian with experience in this area.

This resource is designed to support, not replace, tailored advice from your medical team.

For more information about low histamine diets and other dietary adjustments, please see our Self-Management Toolkit HERE

Introduction

Why Does Diet Matter?

Diet plays a really important role in helping those with MCAS, but can also be one of the trickiest areas to navigate, as those with MCAS often have dietary triggers.

What you eat can directly influence mast cell behaviour and histamine levels in the body.

Common Dietary Challenges with MCAS

People with MCAS often face considerable challenges with food, including:

- Food sensitivities and intolerances: MCAS can cause reactivity to a wide range of foods.
- Variable and evolving triggers: Food triggers can change over time or vary based on other factors such as stress, hormone levels, illness, or environmental exposures.
- Digestive issues: Symptoms like bloating, nausea, abdominal pain, and altered bowel habits are common and may require additional dietary adjustments.
- Nutritional adequacy: Due to multiple food restrictions, maintaining a balanced, nutrient-rich diet can be difficult without careful planning.

Gaining Weight on a Low Histamine Diet

Although there is no official diet for those who have MCAS, many people with the condition follow a low histamine diet as a way to help manage their symptoms.

It's not uncommon for people with MCAS to experience weight loss or have a lower BMI, particularly during times when symptoms are flaring

Maintaining a healthy weight is important, as being undernourished can affect overall health and wellbeing (see our malnutrition sheet for more information).

So how can you gain weight if following a low histamine diet?

- If you can't manage large meals and have a smaller appetite, then try and eat little and often throughout the day. Experiment with eating 5-6 times a day or every 3 hours.

- The full elimination part of the low histamine diet should only be followed for 2-4 weeks before you start a gradual reintroduction of foods.

- Once you've identified which foods work well for you, it may become easier to gradually include more variety in your diet, helping you get the nutrients your body needs. If, after reintroducing foods, your diet remains very restricted due to ongoing reactions, please reach out to a health professional for personalised guidance.



HELPFUL TIP

Build up your own safe recipe book using your safe foods in different combinations. Search online for recipe inspiration and swap out any foods you can't tolerate.

Balancing Foods on a Low Histamine Diet

Try and include a low histamine protein and carbohydrate source with each meal. Ideally your plate will be made up of 1/3 carbohydrates, 1/3 protein and 1/3 vegetables.



Choose products with fewer ingredients if you have issues with additives

Low histamine protein sources include:

- Fresh and minced meats e.g., chicken, turkey, non-aged beef, lamb
- Fresh or frozen white fish
- Eggs
- Certain cheeses such as mozzarella, cottage cheese, marscapone
- Nuts (not pistachio's) and their butters and seeds

Low histamine carbohydrate sources include:

- Oats
- Quinoa
- Rice
- Wheat products such as pasta/noodles/bread/wraps/crackers, or gluten-free versions of these
- Buckwheat
- Bulgar wheat
- Potatoes/sweet potatoes
- Corn/maize products
- Sorghum. (2,3)

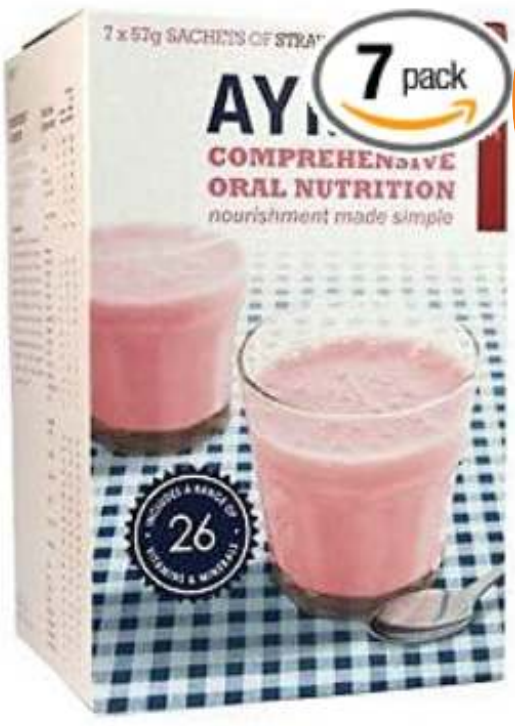
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Gaining Weight on a Low Histamine Diet

Tips for increasing energy and protein Intake on a low histamine diet

When eating bigger portions is challenging, focusing on foods that are 'energy dense' and pack more energy into smaller amounts can be helpful..

- Add mozzarella or plant-based cheese alternatives to dishes such as soups, pasta dishes, and sandwiches.
- Avoid 'light' versions of products and opt for full-fat versions.
- Add nut butters/nuts (apart from pistachios)/seeds to salads/smoothies/stir fries.
- If you are struggling to include protein such as non-meat/fish/beans and pulses/nuts and seeds at each meal, then consider using a protein powder such as hemp, rice, powdered peanut butter, or spirulina.
- Have nutritious milky drinks between meals, such as smoothies, milkshakes, and hot milky drinks. If cow's milk isn't tolerated plant plant-based alternatives could be used, such as soya or oat milk.
- Add cream, ice cream, or custard to a bowl of low histamine fruit, such as apples, for dessert or other puddings. If avoiding dairy, use plant-based alternatives to these.
- Add cans of coconut milk to dishes such as curries, stews, and smoothies.
- Include houmous or nut/seed butters in snacks and salads.
- See our separate resource on Recipe Ideas for MCAS that you can adapt.



Gaining Weight on a Low Histamine Diet

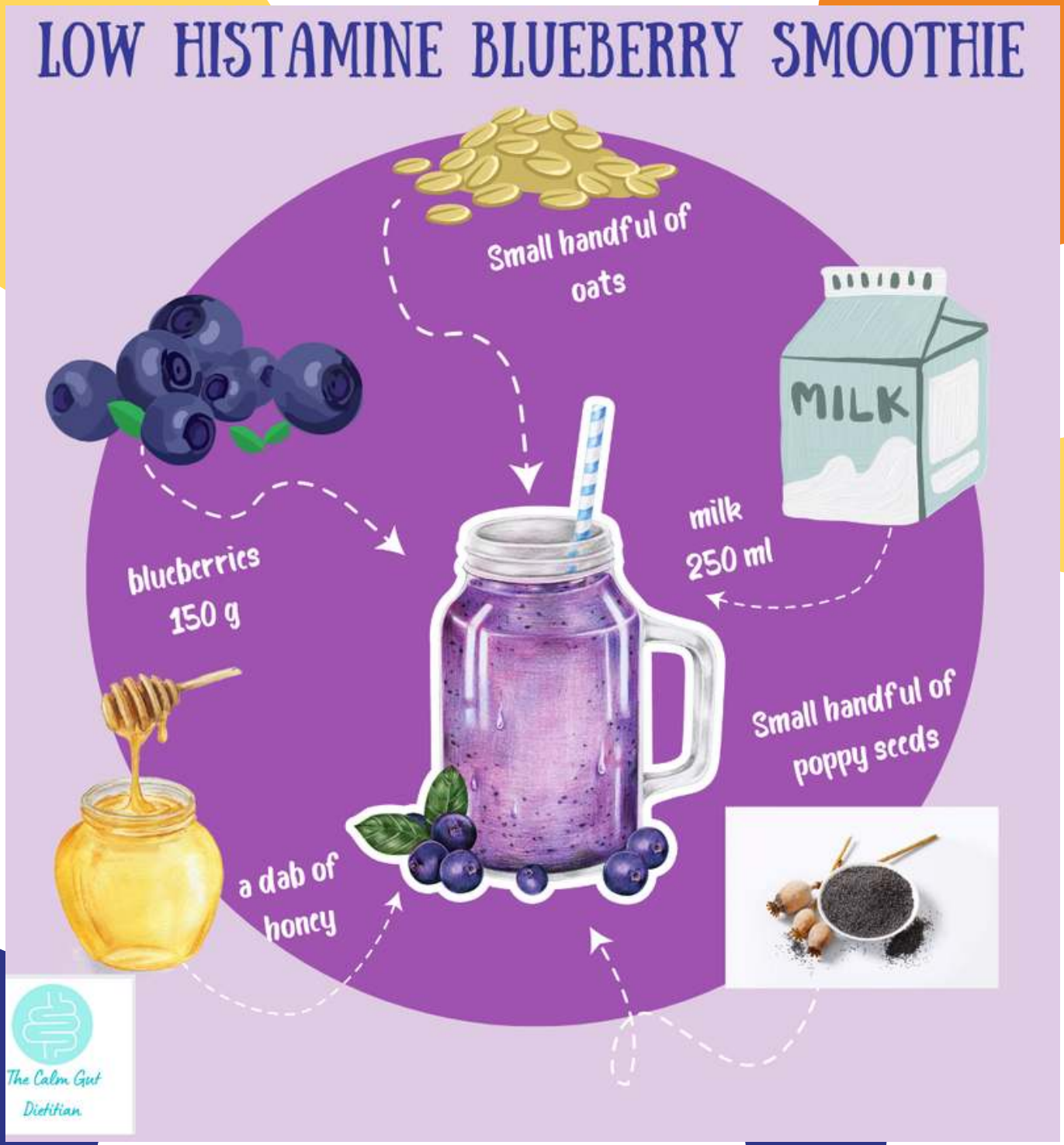
If you find it challenging to meet your nutritional needs through diet alone, prescription nutritional supplements may be available via your GP. These supplements can provide additional energy, protein, vitamins, and minerals. There are strict criteria for prescribing these, based on your BMI and how much weight you have lost.

Although they haven't been specifically tested for histamine content, your healthcare professional can guide you on which supplements might be appropriate based on their ingredients and your personal health.

1. Society TV. Calcium [Available from: https://www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-and-health/nutrients/calcium.
2. Sánchez-Pérez S, Comas-Basté O, Veciana-Nogués MT, Latorre-Moratalla ML, Vidal-Carou MC. Low-Histamine Diets: Is the Exclusion of Foods Justified by Their Histamine Content? Nutrients. 2021;13(5).
3. Sánchez-Pérez S, Comas-Basté O, Rabell-González J, Veciana-Nogués MT, Latorre-Moratalla ML, Vidal-Carou MC. Biogenic Amines in Plant-Origin Foods: Are They Frequently Underestimated in Low-Histamine Diets? Foods. 2018;7(12).



Recipe Idea


LOW HISTAMINE BLUEBERRY SMOOTHIE
Small handful of oats
MILK
milk 250 ml
blueberries 150 g
Small handful of poppy seeds
a dab of honey
The Calm Gut Dietitian

Thank you

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