

Nutrition During Your Cancer Treatment

When you are being treated for cancer, nutrition is an important part of your care. Even if you are eating less than usual, regular meals can help you feel stronger and give you more energy. Use the tips in this handout and talk to your registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) about other ways that you can feel better.

Eating Tips During Cancer Treatment

- Try to eat 6 to 8 small meals and snacks throughout the day. This may be more appealing and better tolerated than 3 large meals.
- Choose foods that are ready to eat or that do not involve much cooking or preparation.
- If you find that meats are hard to eat or if you don't like how they taste, try chopped or ground meats mixed with a sauce or in a soup or casserole. You can also try using other protein sources (like eggs, dairy products, and nut butters) in place of meats.
- Fruits and juices are usually easy to consume and may perk up your taste for other foods. Include them with your meals as a side dish or beverage.
- Allow friends and family to prepare meals or shop for you. Don't hesitate to accept their offers of help. Be sure to tell them if there are certain foods that you can't eat very well or don't like. Make sure the proper food safety guidelines are used in preparation, delivery, and storage.
- Breakfast is the best meal of the day for many people. Try eating a bigger breakfast to keep your energy up during the day.
- If you are physically able, try to get regular exercise to help maintain your muscles and strength.
- Keep high-calorie, high-protein nutritional drinks on hand for those days when you just don't feel like eating. Ask your RDN which one is best for you.

General Tips to Help Manage Side Effects

Nausea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eat bland foods. ■ Try dry, starchy foods (like crackers or toast). ■ Avoid foods with strong smells. ■ Eat foods cold or at room temperature. ■ Keep something in your stomach at all times if nausea happens between meals.
Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eat bland, low-fiber foods. ■ Avoid fried, greasy, and spicy foods. ■ Consider drinks with electrolytes to help replenish lost nutrients. ■ Eat high-potassium foods, such as bananas and potatoes.
Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Keep easy-to-prepare foods on hand and stock your fridge and pantry with snacks you enjoy. ■ Make and freeze extra food on days you feel up to it. ■ Choose foods that are easy to eat and don't require a lot of chewing.
Weight loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stick to an eating schedule so you eat even when you are not hungry. ■ Eat protein-rich foods with all meals and snacks. ■ Pack snacks to keep with you at all times. ■ Consider supplementing your regular diet with high-calorie, high-protein nutritional drinks.

Concerns to Share With Your Doctor

- Tell your treatment team if your pain, diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting are not being managed by the medications you have been prescribed.
- If you have constipation, ask your doctor whether you should start a daily bowel care program, which may include the use of stool softeners or laxatives.
- An appetite stimulant can be helpful for some people. Talk to your doctor to determine if a medication could help you.