

NUTRITION



In this section, you will learn about:

- How a dietitian can help
- How to contact a dietitian
- Tips for eating well when you have cancer
- Vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements

Nutrition



Good nutrition is important at every stage of your cancer care, even after your treatment is finished.

Why is nutrition important?

Eating well during cancer treatment and recovery can help you manage your side effects. Good nutrition will give you more energy and strength to help your body heal and recover from treatment. Nutrition also plays an important role in maintaining and improving the strength of your immune system.

How can a dietitian help?

Registered dietitians are available to help you make smart choices about nutrition. Here are some examples of concerns that patients may have about their nutrition and how a dietitian can help:

Problem	Solution
Unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite or feeling full quickly	Give tips on how to increase the protein and calories in your diet
Trouble chewing or swallowing, sore mouth, dry mouth or throat	Provide a soft diet or liquid diet
Taste changes	Suggest ideas to add flavour to your meals and snacks
Nausea or vomiting	Provide a bland diet and other tips to help manage nausea
Diarrhea or constipation	Adjust the amount of fibre and fluid in your diet
Heartburn, bloating, or gas	Suggest foods to avoid for managing heartburn, bloating, or gas
Difficulty maintaining weight	Suggest special nutrition products or oral nutritional supplements

A dietitian can also help with tube feeding concerns and answer your questions about vitamin, mineral and herbal supplements.

How do I contact a dietitian?

Dietitians are part of the Supportive Care program. If you wish to see a dietitian, ask a member of your health care team to set up a referral for you.

Tips for eating well when you have cancer

Snack & eat often

Have 3 smaller meals plus 2 to 3 snacks with protein each day. It is very common to have a smaller appetite or to fill up more quickly. Eating small amounts more often will be easier and will help your body get the nutrition that it needs.

Drink plenty of fluids

Every cell in your body needs water. Try to have 8 cups (2L) of total fluid per day. Your dietitian can calculate a more specific target based on your age, weight and other factors.

Use nutritional supplements as needed

Many people find that high calorie nutrition products such as Boost™ and Ensure™ make very good snacks and help to maintain body weight during treatment. Your dietitian can help you select the best supplement for your needs.

Your diet can help you manage side effects

To help maintain your weight, it is important to keep side effects under control. The most common side effects are nausea, loss of appetite, difficulty chewing, swallowing, and bowel issues. A combination of diet and medication is often the best way to manage side effects.

Dietitian



519-685-8622

Supportive Care Office
on Level 1

Office Hours:

Monday to Friday
8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Keep in mind that every person is different

During treatment, the best diet for you may be different than the best diet for someone else. Dietitians are a key part of your health care team. They can support you in eating well, maintaining a healthy weight, managing your side effects and meeting your personal nutritional needs.

A diet is not a “cure-all”



Although you may hear about many special diets that cure cancer, there is no research to support these claims. Some of these special diets can be unsafe and lead to weight loss and malnutrition. If you are thinking about starting an alternative diet, be sure to speak to a dietitian or another member of your health care team.

Food safety

Cancer and treatments such as chemotherapy can make your body less able to fight off infection. Since there can be bacteria or other organisms in your food that could make you sick, it is important to keep food safety in mind.



Ask your dietitian for more information about food safety or pick up a copy of the Canadian Cancer Society’s booklet called “Eating Well When you Have Cancer” in the Patient & Family Resource Centre.

If weight loss is an issue

Cancer treatments may affect your energy and appetite. They may also increase the number of calories you need to maintain your weight. It is important to include 2-3 snacks (with protein) every day. Here are some easy snack ideas to get you started:

- Crackers and cheese
- Cereal and milk
- Toast and peanut butter
- 1/2 sandwich (egg salad or tuna)
- fruit and yogurt

For more nutrition tips and snacking ideas, you may ask to see a dietitian at any time during your treatment.

A shopping list for when you do not feel like cooking

During your cancer care, there may be times when you do not feel like making a meal. You might not have the energy to cook or your schedule might be busy with treatments or appointments with your health care team.

This **shopping list** will give you an idea of nutritious and ready-to-serve items that will help you on those days.

For your freezer	For your fridge	For your cupboards
Soups and stews	Eggs	Canned beans, peas, soup, fish (tuna or salmon)
Casseroles	Yogurt	Crackers, bread, muffins
Ice cream	Cheese snacks	Hot and cold cereals
Popsicles	100% fruit juice	Nuts, seeds, peanut butter (or other nut butters)
Frozen yogurt	Milk products	Pasta and rice
Microwave frozen entrees	Cut-up fruits and vegetables	Skim milk powder
Other quick-to-prepare frozen foods (chicken strips, pizza, fish, etc.)	Bean or yogurt-based dips	Snack packs (applesauce, pudding, fruit cocktails)

Vitamins, minerals and herbal supplements

Vitamins, minerals and herbal supplements are examples of **alternative therapies** (a treatment that is used instead of a typical treatment) or a **complementary therapy** (a therapy that is used together with a conventional treatment). You may hear or read about a supplement that can help you beat cancer but they are not always safe.

In most cases, whole food is the best way to get the vitamins and minerals that our body needs. Some vitamin and mineral supplements can interact or interfere with your radiation or chemotherapy, including:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C
- Selenium
- Coenzyme Q-10
- Beta-carotene
- Vitamin E
- Zinc

Herbal products that can also interfere with treatment include:

- Essiac tea/ Flor-Essence™
- Mushroom extracts
- Acai or mangosteen juice
- Noni or goji berries
- Taheebo
- Laetrile



If you are interested in taking any vitamin, mineral or herbal supplements, please talk to your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian.



Recommended resources

BC Cancer Agency

<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/>

Dietitians of Canada

www.dietitians.ca

Health Canada: Canada's Food Guide

www.hc-sc.gc.ca



In the Patient & Family Resource Centre

Canadian Cancer Society pamphlets:

- Complementary Therapies: A guide for people with cancer
- Eating Well When You Have Cancer

Books:

- Cooking with Foods that Fight Cancer by Dr. R. Beliveau
- Eat Well - Stay Nourished, A Recipe and Resource Guide for Coping with Eating Challenges by Nancy E. Leupold
- Goes Down Easy: Recipes to Help You Cope With the Challenge of Eating During Cancer Treatment by Elise Mecklinger
- The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide by Jean LaMantia