



Nutrition During Treatment for Cancer



Most Common Problems

+ Loss of Appetite/Weight Loss

- Eat small, frequent nutrient dense meals – have snacks
- Cheese, peanut butter, nuts, nutritional supplements – instant breakfast/Boost
- Eat biggest meal when hungry; avoid drinking fluids with meals
- Consume adequate protein:
 - 1 ounce of meat, chicken, fish or cheese = 7 grams of protein
 - 1 egg = 7 grams of protein
 - ½ c beans = 7-9 grams of protein
 - Other goods sources: cottage cheese, tofu, protein powder supplements

+ Nausea/Vomiting

- Medications usage, avoid strong food odors
- Avoid large portions, fatty/greasy, spicy, and very sweet foods
- Small, frequent meals with bland foods, ginger ale or other clear liquids

+ Alterations in Sense of Taste or Smell

- Stronger flavors enhance taste

+ Diarrhea

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Try tea, toast, bananas, applesauce
- Milk can sometimes make diarrhea worse

- Low residue diet (low in insoluble fiber)
- Soluble fiber supplements – Benefiber, citracil, Metamucil (psyllium)
- Probiotics
- Low fat diet may help

+ Sore Mouth or Throat

- Softer foods/liquids: puddings, shakes, smoothies, soups – use milk based fluids for extra calories and protein
- Dry mouth: drink water with each bite of food; try sweet or tart foods; suck on hard candies; moisten foods with gravies/sauces/juices – artificial saliva also available

+ Fatigue

- Increase intake of nutrient-dense, protein-rich foods
- Obtain regular physical activity
- Stay hydrated – usually need 8-8 ounce glasses of fluid/day
- Check with your physician to see if you're anemic

+ Use of Dietary Supplements

- General multi-vitamin/mineral supplement ok; Goal: obtain needed vitamins/minerals from healthy foods
- Avoid high doses

+ Important Points:

- Goal – consume adequate calories and protein
- Try to get some physical activity
- Monitor weight – avoid excessive weight loss or gain

Resources:

- <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/eatinghints>
- American Cancer Society: Eating Well, Staying Well, During and After Cancer
- American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute Web sites