



CANCERcare®

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COPING WITH APPETITE AND WEIGHT CHANGES

Treatment side effects can be the reason you react differently to foods, lack an appetite or experience weight loss/gain. This can leave you feeling exhausted and self-conscious about your body. There are many ways to help you cope with these changes.

APPETITE CHANGES DURING TREATMENT

Here are important tips when experiencing a change in appetite:

Talk with your doctor. Treatment side effects like nausea can disrupt how hungry you are or cause difficulties eating. It's important to address the following with your doctor:

- Change in taste or smell
- Trouble swallowing or feeling if you are choking while eating
- Feelings such as stress, fear, depression, and anxiety
- Feeling puffy or bloated
- Any food restrictions you may have
- Changing or starting an exercise routine
- Considering dietary supplements. Your doctor can help treat these issues as they arise, helping you maintain a healthy diet.

Maintain oral health. Mouth or teeth problems can occur and affect your eating habits. Talk with your dentist about your oral health throughout treatment.

Talk to a certified dietitian or nutritionist throughout treatment. Nutritional needs during treatment vary from person to person. A dietitian or nutritionist can personalize your eating and hydration needs. They can also answer questions regarding decreased appetite and chewing/swallowing challenges.

TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR APPETITE

Do your best to maintain a nutritious diet during and after cancer treatment. Eating right isn't just about making you feel better. It is also important for your health and recovery.

- Avoid strong food odors, which can bring on nausea.
- Rinse your mouth often to eliminate any bad taste.
- Think balance. Try to eat a variety of different foods every day, including proteins, fruits and vegetables, carbohydrates and healthy fats. This will assist you in obtaining a diet that is high in vital nutrients.
- When having a meal, try to eat protein foods first.
- Make the atmosphere more pleasant during mealtime by using colorful place settings, flowers, or background music. Arrange your plate attractively and garnish your food.
- Eat smaller meals frequently throughout the day rather than two or three big meals.
- Have healthy snacks between meals.
- Establish a pattern of eating meals and snacks at the same time each day. Stick to this schedule, even when you are not hungry.
- Keep snacks handy. People tend to eat more when food is readily available.
- At times when your appetite is not good, rely on foods you really like.

COPING WITH WEIGHT CHANGES

Treatment side effects can also cause weight loss or gain. This may affect the way you feel about your appearance and your body image. A poor body image may cause you to feel self-conscious and anxious. It's important to keep the following in mind:

Your feelings about body image, weight and physical changes are valid. Creating a safe space to explore how you are adjusting can provide relief.

Surround yourself with people who encourage you to be yourself and who recognize your feelings.

Identify people whom you can depend on for support. These may include family members, friends, a spiritual leader or your health care team.

Take time to relax. Wear clothes that make you feel good, or get a massage.

Talk to your doctor about an exercise routine. Exercise can improve your self-esteem and help you feel strong. People living with cancer also find yoga beneficial. Yoga practices connect the mind and body through moving meditations.

Give yourself credit. Practice praising yourself about any of the things you like about yourself, such as your laugh, your kindness and other positive qualities.

Ask for help with practical matters. The stress of weight and appetite changes can take a toll. Having friends and family members help with day-to-day tasks such as grocery shopping or preparing meals can help relieve stress.

Join a support group or seek individual counseling to cope with your weight change and body image. Support groups provide a chance to meet and interact with other people who can understand your experience. An oncology social worker can help people cope with this 'new normal.' CancerCare offers free face-to-face, telephone and online support groups led by professional oncology social workers.

RESOURCES

American Institute for Cancer Research
www.aicr.org

Cook for Your LIFE
www.cookforyourlife.org

Look Good...Feel Better
www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org
800-395-5665

Oncology Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group
www.oncologynutrition.org

The Oley Foundation
www.oley.org
800 776 6539

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include case management, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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