



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)
info@cancer.org
www.cancer.org

fact sheet

THE IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION DURING TREATMENT

Cancer treatment can be the reason some individuals react differently to foods and, as a result, eating healthy can be difficult for many. Nutrition is an important part of maintaining your strength and weight and can help cope with treatment side effects. There are many ways to get the nutrients you need when treatment disrupts your diet.

HOW SIDE EFFECTS CAN CHANGE YOUR EATING HABITS

Side effects of cancer treatment can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Loss of appetite
- Dry mouth
- Difficulty swallowing
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Chronic lethargy
- Dehydration
- Weight and muscle loss
- Changes in smell or taste

These side effects can be challenging and may leave you feeling exhausted. This can make meals no longer enjoyable, and some may even begin to see meals as a hassle.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS TO MANAGE SIDE EFFECTS

- Include a protein, carbohydrate and fat at each meal. This will satisfy you and provide essential nutrients.
- If possible, eat fresh vegetables, whole grains, fruit and protein.
- Focus on high protein snacks: hard-boiled eggs, nuts, seeds, nut butter, peanut butter, hummus.
- Frequently sip on water throughout the day to stay hydrated.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS DURING TREATMENT

- Place a full glass of water on your nightstand before going to sleep, and drink 1-2 glasses of water immediately after you wake up. Your body is dehydrated after sleep and treatment can cause dehydration.
- Put lemon juice or fresh fruit in water for taste and to maintain electrolyte balance.
- Herbal teas count towards water intake, while coffee can cause dehydration. Drink two cups of water for every cup of coffee.
- Don't wait until you're hungry. Eat every 3-5 hours to maintain proper blood sugar levels.

FOODS WITH MANY HEALTH BENEFITS

Coconut water

- Replaces lost electrolytes, which makes it a good drink for fast hydration, and contains more potassium per serving than bananas

Bananas

- Contain complex carbohydrates to quickly restore energy during and after treatment and fiber to promote healthy digestion

Raw cacao powder (pronounced ka-cow)

- A rich supply of magnesium, dietary fiber and antioxidants, including flavanols and polyphenols, which stimulate the central nervous system and improves circulation

(over)

Ground flaxseed

- Good source of lignans which are found in plant-based foods that may reduce cholesterol and blood pressure
- Proper balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids which may help reduce inflammation and support brain function

TIPS FOR GETTING HELP WITH NUTRITION

- Ask your doctor to speak with a nutritionist or dietician at your treatment center.
- Bring a list of the foods you've been eating for the past week to the nutritionist appointment and ask what foods they suggest.
- Ask what the best way is to follow up with the nutritionist after the appointment and make sure to get an updated nutritional plan.
- Use INA[®] to get free, HIPAA-compliant nutritional support 24/7. INA[®] is a program developed by oncology dietitians to manage nutritional concerns and side effects before, during and after treatment for cancer (www.cancercare.org/nutrition).
- Check with trusted sites like the American Cancer Society's Nutrition & Cancer pages for more guidance (www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active).

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 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)**.

Facebook: [facebook.com/CancerCare](https://www.facebook.com/CancerCare) | **Instagram:** @CancerCareUS | **Twitter:** @CancerCare

CHOCOLATE MINT PROTEIN SMOOTHIE DURING TREATMENT

Ingredients

- 1 cup coconut water
- 1 frozen banana
- 3 tbsp hemp protein powder
- 2 tbsp cacao powder (substitute cocoa powder that does not contain added sugar)
- 1 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1/8 tsp peppermint extract or 3-5 mint sprigs

Preparation

Put all ingredients in blender. Blend until smooth and creamy. Serves one. Enjoy!

*Edited by Charlotte Ference, LMSW
This fact sheet is supported by Alliance Rx Walgreens Prime.*



CANCERcare[®]

National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

© 2020 CancerCare[®]