



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)
info@cancercares.org
www.cancercares.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. 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
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chronic lethargy
- Constipation
- Dehydration
- Weight and muscle loss
- General muscle weakness
- A change in smell, taste, and chewing

These side effects can be challenging and can leave you feeling exhausted. This can make meals no longer enjoyable and seen as a hassle. Here are important tips to help you eat healthy meals when experiencing treatment side effects or a change in appetite:

- Include a protein, carbohydrate and fat at each meal. This will satisfy you and provide essential nutrients required during treatment.

- Try to avoid processed foods. When possible, eat fresh vegetables, whole grains, fruit, and protein.
- Try to avoid fried, sugary foods and limit salt intake.
- Focus on high protein snacks: hard-boiled egg, nuts, seeds, nut butter/peanut butter, hummus.
- Frequently sip on water throughout the day to maintain stay hydrated.

Healthy Eating Tips During Treatment

- Drink 1-2 glasses of water immediately after you wake up. Your body is dehydrated after sleep and treatment can cause dehydration. Water first thing in the morning gets digestion moving and wakes you up. Placing a full glass of water on your nightstand before going to sleep can be helpful.
- Put lemon juice or fresh fruit in water for taste and to maintain electrolyte balance. Herbal teas count towards water intake.
- Coffee causes dehydration. Drink two cups of water for every cup of coffee.

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- Drink liquids in between meals/snacks. Your digestion system needs to focus on digesting and absorbing nutrients.
- Eat every 3-5 hours to maintain proper blood sugar levels. Don't wait until you're hungry.
- Try to eat fresh foods: real orange vs. orange juice.
- Keep snacks in your car, work desk, purse, etc. You don't want to be hungry without proper nutrition within reach.

FOODS WITH MANY HEALTH BENEFITS

Coconut water

- Low in carbohydrates and sodium but contains more potassium than four bananas
- Replaces lost electrolytes which makes it ultimate drink for fast hydration

Banana

- Contains complex carbohydrates to quickly restore energy during and after treatment
- Fiber to keep you feeling fuller for longer and promote healthy digestion

Hemp protein

- Contains all nine essential amino acids, making it a complete protein
- Two types of proteins, edestin and albumin, which dissolve easily so it is readily available for the body to use
- The most easily digested form of protein and meets cellular demands for DNA repair

Raw cacao powder (pronounced ka-cow)

- A rich supply of magnesium, dietary fiber and antioxidants including flavanols and polyphenols
- Helps prevent cell damage
- Stimulates central nervous system, improves circulation and relaxes muscles
- Increases the body's release of serotonin, the happy hormone

Peppermint

- Aids digestion and relieves gastrointestinal disturbances
- Improves blood circulation which helps provide nutrition to cells

Ground flaxseed

- Good source of lignans which are chemical compounds 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

CHOCOLATE MINT PROTEIN SMOOTHIE DURING TREATMENT - SERVES ONE

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 1/4 tsp if you enjoy peppermint or 3-5 mint sprigs)

Preparation

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

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 professional 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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*Edited by Ashley Chookazian, LSW
Certified Nutrition Counselor*



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

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