

Nutrition and water are important parts of maintaining your strength and coping with cancer. Treatment side effects can make you react to foods differently or even harder to eat in general. This fact sheet covers:

- **The effect of cancer on eating habits**
- **Getting help with nutrition**
- **Healthy eating tips**
- **Foods with many benefits**



How Cancer Can Change Your Eating Habits

Chemotherapy and other forms of treatment can impact how you eat or even whether you have an appetite at all. This may make it hard to get the healthy nutrients your body needs. The side effects of cancer treatment can include:

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

These side effects can make eating a challenge, or may show a state of dehydration or loss of energy. This can make meals no longer enjoyable, and some may not even want to eat at all.



Getting Help

Working with your health care team, a nutritionist can help with making food and eating choices that help you. Ask if your treatment center has one or whether they can recommend one.

Check with trusted sites like the American Cancer Society's Nutrition & Cancer pages for more ideas and guidance (www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active).



Healthy Eating Tips During Treatment

- 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.
- 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.
- Put lemon juice or fresh fruit in water for taste and to maintain electrolyte balance.
- Herbal teas keep your water levels up, but coffee can cause dehydration. Drink two cups of water for every cup of coffee.
- Don't wait until you're hungry. Try to eat every 3-5 hours to maintain proper blood sugar levels.



Food With Multiple Benefits

Coconut water. Replaces lost electrolytes, which makes this 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. A rich supply of magnesium, dietary fiber and antioxidants, including flavanols and polyphenols, which stimulate the central nervous system and improves circulation.

Ground flaxseed. Good source of lignans which are found in plant-based foods that may reduce cholesterol and blood pressure. It also provides a balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids that can help reduce inflammation and support brain function.

CancerCare® Can Help

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