

Recent Weight Change (Gain or Loss)

It is common to experience weight changes before, during and after cancer treatment. Perhaps you lost weight prior to your cancer diagnosis. Or you may have struggled with weight for many years. You may find that as a result of surgery, chemotherapy, treatment side effects, new medications, less physical activity or depression you have gained weight. Some of these changes will be temporary and some may last much longer. Please talk to your health care team if you are concerned either about weight loss or gain. They will have suggestions to help to determine the causes of your weight gain or loss and then work with you to find solutions that are specific for your situation.

Weight issues can be a very personal thing. If you want to lose weight, you might find that being on a strict diet and exercise plan may not blend well with your cancer treatment at this time. Your doctor may not want you to lose or gain too much weight during treatment. Above all, focusing on good nutrition and reasonable physical activity may be your best approach to a weight issue. Research has shown that obesity can result in cancer recurrence in some types of cancer. Eating healthy during and after cancer is an excellent way to improve your health and well-being with and beyond cancer.

Talk with your doctor about what concerns you and work together to identify the reasons for your weight loss or gain and talk about solutions. You may want to consult with a registered dietitian to develop an eating and nutrition plan that works well for you.

Some of the most common reasons for weight loss are:

- Loss of appetite; stress and anxiety
- Changes in your sense of taste and smell
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Dry mouth or mouth sores
- Diarrhea

Weight gain can be caused by:

- Stress and anxiety
- Hormone or steroid treatments
- Fluid retention from medications
- Decrease in physical activity

Changes in the way your body normally looks may leave you feeling sad, angry, out of control or depressed. Knowing what to expect at each stage of your cancer journey can help you to feel more in control and even to prepare for these changes in your weight.

Be patient and give yourself (and others) time to adjust to your new body. Consider joining a class such as yoga. Even simple walking exercises for a few minutes each day will help your body feel more energized and less stressed. If you are distressed about weight changes, talking with others in a similar situation, a dietitian or a nutritional counselor can be helpful.