

Good nutrition is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

However, being a caregiver for a person with cancer can make it hard to maintain a healthy diet. Your loved one may have side effects like nausea, fatigue, vomiting, loss of appetite, and depression. These are common and can be managed with the support of the health care team. However, they may also affect your daily routines and eating habits as well.

It is important to recognize your own needs. Find a balance in supporting your loved one and caring for your nutritional needs. This may include different eating times, eating different foods than your loved one, and eating when your loved one isn't. It is common for caregivers to feel guilty for eating normally while your loved one is not. It is important to continue taking care of yourself while supporting your loved one.

It is important to take notice of any emotional or physical factors that might affect your appetite. Sometimes fear, depression, and loneliness can affect a person's appetite. This can cause problems with overall health and well-being. Eating properly can make a difference during treatment and recovery. It is important to understand how nutrition affects your health and ability to care for your loved one. Here are some tips for you and your loved one to help better manage eating and nutrition.

- **Talk to a health care provider.** Share any questions and concerns about diet with your doctor. These concerns may be physical, practical, or emotional. Food preference and lifestyles can be different from person to person. You can ask for a referral to a dietitian if you want more information. They can help you make a plan that meets your health needs and goals.
- **Voice your opinion about food.** While eating habits and meals may change when supporting your loved one, it is important for you to eat healthy foods and foods that you enjoy. Try to find a balance with your loved ones that allows you to also eat the foods that you need.



www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

1-888-793-9355



■ **Be flexible about where eating occurs.**

If there are specific places that might make it easier or more pleasant for your loved one with cancer to eat, eat in those areas during mealtimes as much as possible. Their appetite might vary, which might make their mealtimes different from yours. Ask family to sit with them or adjust family meal time so that they don't always have to eat alone.

■ **Be supportive in social settings.** Food and eating is a large part of social activities. Understand that your loved one may eat more during social activities. Or they may want to avoid these settings if eating is difficult. This social time may be important to you and provide you some respite, so work together to find middle ground.

■ **Anticipate varied likes/dislikes.** It is not uncommon for people with cancer's taste buds to change, at least temporarily. Be supportive of different requests by your loved one. Suggest different options than what they ate before cancer.

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • www.patientadvocate.org

Cancer Support Community Resources

Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.

MyLifeLine — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at www.MyLifeLine.org.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate.

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org.

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

© October 2020. Cancer Support Community. All rights reserved.