

Good nutrition is an important part of any healthy lifestyle, but a cancer diagnosis can make it difficult to maintain a healthy diet and proper eating habits. Depending on the type of treatment, you may have side effects like nausea, fatigue, vomiting, loss of appetite, depression, stress, and others. These side effects can impact your treatment course and your quality of life. If you are concerned about side effects that are impacting eating and overall nutrition, talk to your doctor or dietitian for assistance.

It is not unusual to only remember physical symptoms (like nausea) because they are most obvious to you and those around you. However, it is also important to take notice of any emotional or practical factors that might affect your appetite. Though it is easier said than done, eating properly and understanding how your nutrition affects your cancer experience can make a difference during treatment and recovery.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” recommendation on diet and nutrition for cancer patients. Treatment and its side effects may change the way your body processes food. You may need more of a certain kind of food than you did before. You may be told to avoid other foods because they are more likely to cause symptoms.

**Good nutrition is especially important when your body is fighting a disease. Healthy eating can help you:**

- Get the nutrition you need
- Tolerate the side effects of treatment
- Lower your risk of infection
- Prevent and manage other health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and osteoporosis
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Feel your best

Your nutrition is an important part of your cancer treatment. Here are some tips for you and your family to help you better manage your eating and nutrition.

**TALK TO YOUR HEALTH PROVIDERS.**

The first step to eating healthier is to talk with your health care team. They understand your health needs and can let you know which foods to eat more of or avoid based on your diagnosis, lifestyle, treatment plan, and food preferences.



[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)  
1-888-793-9355



## **VOICE YOUR OPINION ABOUT YOUR FOOD.**

Your desire to eat may decrease due to the side effects of cancer treatment, so it is important to eat healthy, but also eat things that you enjoy.

## **EAT WHEN AND WHERE YOU ARE COMFORTABLE.**

If there is a specific place in your home that might make eating easier or more pleasant, try to go to those areas during meal times as much as possible. Your appetite might vary from those of your family members, which might make your meal times different from your family members. Ask a family member to sit with you or adjust family meal time so that you don't always have to eat alone.

## **KEEP A JOURNAL.**

A journal is not only essential to keeping track of your other symptoms, but it is a great tool to assist in the tracking of your diet. This can help you and your family keep up with your eating schedule and preferences. It might also help you to connect any changes you have in your diet with new treatment, physical, or emotional changes.

## **TALK TO A REGISTERED DIETITIAN.**

Your cancer center or doctor will most likely have a registered dietitian who can sit down with you and help you create an eating plan that works best for you. Beware of nutritional scams or products that promise to cure cancer through nutrition or nutritional supplements. A registered dietitian, doctor or nurse is the best experts at discussing the most important things to manage with your diet or any dietary supplements.

## **More Helpful Tips to Manage Your Nutrition**

- ✓ When you just don't feel like eating, consider drinking a liquid or powdered meal replacement (such as "instant breakfast").
- ✓ Consider eating 5 or 6 small meals each day instead of 3 large meals.
- ✓ You may find it helps to eat smaller amounts at any one time. This can keep you from feeling too full and may help reduce nausea.
- ✓ Keep snacks nearby for when you feel like eating. Take easy-to-carry snacks such as peanut butter crackers, nuts, granola bars, or dried fruit when you go out.
- ✓ Find ways to add extra protein and healthy calories to your diet.
- ✓ Drink liquids throughout the day—even when you do not want to eat. Choose liquids that add calories and other nutrients such as juice, soup, milk, and soy-based drinks with protein.
- ✓ Try eating a light bedtime snack. This will give extra calories but won't affect your appetite for the next meal.
- ✓ Change the form of a food. For instance, you might make a fruit milkshake or smoothie instead of eating a piece of fruit.
- ✓ Eat soft, cool, or frozen foods. These include yogurt, milkshakes, and popsicles.
- ✓ Eat larger meals when you feel well and are rested. For many people, this is in the morning after a good night's sleep.
- ✓ Sip only small amounts of liquids during meals. Many people feel too full if they eat and drink at the same time. If you want more than just small sips, have a larger drink at least 30 minutes before or after meals.

For healthy recipes, visit [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/recipe-gallery-during-cancer-treatment](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/recipe-gallery-during-cancer-treatment).

# General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

**Cancer Support Community** • 888-793-9355 • [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)

**American Cancer Society** • 800-227-2345 • [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**CancerCare** • 800-813-4673 • [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Cancer.net** • 888-651-3038 • [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net)

**Caregiver Action Network** • 855-227-3640 • [www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)

**Healthcare.gov** • [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

**Livestrong Foundation** • 866-673-7205 • [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

**National Cancer Institute** • 800-422-6237 • [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine** • 888-644-6226 • [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

**Patient Advocate Foundation** • 800-532-5274 • [www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org)

## CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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

**Cancer Support Helpline**<sup>®</sup>—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**<sup>®</sup>—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**<sup>®</sup>—Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs.

[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate).

**Cancer Experience Registry**<sup>®</sup>—Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at [www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org](http://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.

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