

Nutrition

Getting enough calories and nutrients each day is a good goal for anyone, but particularly crucial for people with cancer.

As a person with cancer, you may experience weight loss due to side effects from both the illness itself and the required treatment. But fighting cancer requires physical strength, so it is important for you to try and maintain a healthy weight.

HOW CAN I GET ENOUGH CALORIES?

You can keep yourself strong and your weight stable by eating enough calories every day. Your calorie needs will vary by age, sex, weight, height, cancer status, and any other co-morbidities or health conditions. Talk to your oncology team about what your daily calorie-intake goal should be.

Here's how to ensure that you get the calories you need, despite the side effects you may be feeling:

If you are experiencing...

You may want to...

Low appetite/feeling full quickly

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals (5 to 6 per day).
- Snack on calorie-dense foods, such as avocados, guacamole, nuts, hummus, olives, granola, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, peanut butter crackers, trail mix, and protein shakes.
- Include lean protein at each meal, such as eggs, fish, chicken, turkey, seafood, beans, tofu, and lentils.
- Sip fluids throughout the day instead of just with meals.

Diarrhea

- Trial liquids for a few days.
- Eat salty or high-potassium foods.

Changes in taste

- Season your food with citrus, vinegar-based dressings, pickled foods, herbs, and spices.
- Add sugar to improve the flavor of salty foods and add salt to sugary foods.
- Use plastic utensils instead of metal.
- Rinse your mouth out with a baking soda / salt water mixture.

Nausea and vomiting

- Eat bland, starchy foods.
- Eat food at room temperature.

Dehydration

- Try flavored waters to increase variety.
- Keep a filled water bottle nearby at all times.
- Use a timer to remind yourself to drink water.
- Eat liquid foods, such as broth, soups, gelatin, popsicles, ice cream, milkshakes, sorbets, and protein shakes

HOW CAN I GET THE RIGHT NUTRIENTS?

Not only do you need to consume enough calories every day, you also need to take in the proper nutrients.

To achieve this, you can:

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily every day.
- Take a daily multivitamin, especially if you don't have a wide variety of food in your diet.
 - Talk to your oncology team before taking high-dose supplements of any one vitamin and mineral, as these can interact poorly with certain medications.
 - Look for supplements that have the “NSF” or “USP” seal on the bottle to ensure they do not include hidden additives.
- Limit your intake of:
 - Sugar-sweetened beverages (soda, juice)
 - Highly processed foods (chips, candies, cookies, pies)
 - Alcohol (limit to <1 drink per week or eliminate completely)
 - Saturated fat (red and processed meats, dairy products made with whole milk)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Cancer Society: Nutrition and Physical Activity Guideline for Cancer Survivors
<https://acsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/share/G4974PF53TBHM5KYA9IF?target=10.3322/caac.21721>
- American Cancer Society: Nutrition and Physical Activity During and After Cancer Treatment
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/nutrition-and-physical-activity-during-and-after-cancer-treatment.html>
- American Cancer Society: Nutrition and Physical Activity After Cancer Treatment (PDF)
<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/cancer-control/en/booklets-flyers/nutrition-and-physical-activity-after-cancer-treatment.pdf>

