



NUTRITION GUIDE

Disclaimer: This guide is for general informational purposes only and is not medical advice. Nutrition needs vary widely during cancer treatment. Always follow the recommendations of your oncology team and registered dietitian.

Practical Tips to Support Your Strength During Treatment

Nutrition plays a critical role during treatment and recovery. Eating well can help you maintain energy, support your immune system, and improve daily comfort. Many patients experience changes in appetite, taste, or digestion, which can make eating feel challenging. This guide offers simple, realistic steps to help you stay nourished, even on difficult days.

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1. WHY NUTRITION MATTERS DURING TREATMENT

Good nutrition gives your body the fuel and nutrients it needs to stay strong. During treatment, your body works harder to repair tissues and manage side effects. Eating consistently—even small amounts throughout the day—supports your overall well-being.

Nutrition helps your body:

- Maintain energy levels
- Support healing and recovery
- Strengthen your immune system
- Manage or reduce treatment side effects
- Maintain muscle mass and healthy weight

You do not need to eat perfectly. Small, steady choices make a meaningful difference.

2. KEY NUTRIENTS TO FOCUS ON

During treatment, certain nutrients become especially important. Focusing on these can help you stay strong and reduce fatigue.

PROTEIN:

Supports healing, muscle strength, and immune function.

Sources include eggs, poultry, fish, beans, yogurt, cottage cheese, tofu, and nut butters.

HEALTHY FATS:

Provide long-lasting energy and support brain and heart health.

Sources include avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and salmon.

COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES:

Help maintain stable energy throughout the day.

Sources include oatmeal, whole grains, potatoes, brown rice, and quinoa.

FLUIDS:

Prevent dehydration and help manage side effects such as fatigue, dry mouth, or dizziness.

Include water, electrolyte drinks, broth, and herbal teas.

3. EATING DURING TREATMENT

Treatment may change your appetite, your sense of taste, or how food feels in your body. The goal is not perfection—it's simply getting enough nourishment in ways that feel comfortable.

If your appetite is low:

- Eat small meals every 2–3 hours
- Keep quick snacks nearby
- Choose high-calorie, high-protein options like smoothies, yogurt, or nut butters
- Avoid drinking large amounts of fluid before meals

If foods taste different:

- Try tart or citrus flavors to reset your palate
- Use herbs, spices, or marinades to enhance flavor
- Experiment with different temperatures and textures
- Rinse your mouth with water or baking soda solution before eating

If nausea is an issue:

- Choose bland foods such as crackers, toast, rice, or applesauce
- Eat slowly and avoid greasy or heavily seasoned foods
- Sip ginger tea or try ginger candies
- Take prescribed anti-nausea medications consistently

If chewing or swallowing is difficult:

- Try soft foods like soups, oatmeal, mashed potatoes, smoothies, or pudding
- Avoid dry or crumbly foods
- Ask about a referral to a speech or swallow therapist if needed

Listening to your body and making gentle adjustments can make eating more comfortable.

4. SIMPLE MEAL PLANNING TIPS

Meal planning during treatment should be simple and manageable. You do not need complicated recipes or long cooking sessions.

Helpful strategies include:

- Prepare meals ahead of time on days when you feel well
- Keep your freezer stocked with easy-to-reheat options
- Use pre-cut fruits and vegetables to save energy
- Keep protein-rich snacks on hand such as cheese sticks, hummus, or protein shakes
- Ask friends or family to help with meal prep if possible

The easier meals are to prepare, the more likely you are to stay nourished.

5. SMART SNACKING

Snacks are an easy way to boost calories and nutrients without overwhelming your appetite.

Nutritious snack ideas include:

- Greek yogurt
- Nuts or nut butter
- Cheese and crackers
- Smoothies
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Oatmeal cups
- Avocado toast
- Low-sugar protein bars

Keeping snacks visible and within reach encourages you to eat more consistently throughout the day.

6. HYDRATION STRATEGIES

Staying hydrated is just as important as eating well. Hydration can reduce fatigue, headaches, dizziness, and certain treatment side effects.

Helpful hydration tips:

- Sip fluids throughout the day
- Add lemon, cucumber, or fruit for flavor
- Include hydrating foods such as soups, smoothies, and watermelon
- Use electrolyte drinks if recommended by your care team
- Set phone reminders if you tend to forget to drink

Small amounts of fluid consumed regularly can add up quickly.

7. WHEN TO ASK FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP

A registered dietitian, especially one who specializes in oncology, can provide personalized guidance when eating becomes difficult.

Ask for help if you experience:

- Unintended or ongoing weight loss
- Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Difficulty swallowing
- Mouth or throat soreness
- Significant changes in taste
- Very low appetite for more than a few days

Your care team can help refer you to an oncology dietitian who understands the unique nutritional needs of cancer patients.

8. SAMPLE EASY DAILY MEAL OUTLINE

Use this simple outline as inspiration and adjust based on your appetite and comfort level.

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal with fruit and nut butter
- **Morning Snack:** Yogurt, smoothie, or toast with nut butter
- **Lunch:** Soft protein with soup, sandwich, or baked potato
- **Afternoon Snack:** Cheese, crackers, nuts, or fruit
- **Dinner:** Fish, chicken, tofu, or beans with rice, potatoes, or pasta
- **Evening Snack:** Pudding, fruit, or a nutritional shake

Eating smaller meals more often can make nourishment easier and more comfortable.

YOUR ONGOING TREATMENT

Nutrition during treatment is not about perfection; it is about supporting your body in small, steady ways. Even if your appetite changes or eating becomes difficult, each nourishing choice helps maintain your strength and energy. Listen to your body, eat what feels manageable, and ask for help early when you need it.

You do not have to face this alone. With simple strategies, supportive guidance, and the right resources, you can stay nourished throughout treatment and recovery.