



UNC

LINEBERGER COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER

N.C. CANCER HOSPITAL

Nutrition & Cancer Care

Nutrition is very important for people with cancer. Both cancer and its treatments can have a significant impact on your usual eating habits. Eating well can help you:

- ❖ keep up your strength and energy
- ❖ maintain your weight and nutrient stores
- ❖ tolerate side effects of treatment
- ❖ heal and recover quickly



Before and after treatment, focus on general healthy eating:

- ❖ Choose a diet rich in **plant-based foods**.
- ❖ Aim for at least 5 servings of **colorful fruits & veggies** every day.
- ❖ Include lots of **high fiber foods**, like whole grain breads and cereals, fruits and veggies, and legumes (beans and peas).
- ❖ **Limit high fat foods**, especially those from animal sources. Choose low or no fat dairy and lean cuts of meat. Try lower-fat cooking methods like broiling, baking, grilling, or steaming.
- ❖ Go easy on salt, including salt-cured, smoked, and pickled foods.
- ❖ Drink alcohol only in moderation.

Once treatment begins, you may experience side effects that influence your ability to eat. Common side effects include:

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| ❖ Loss of appetite | ❖ Changes in weight |
| ❖ Sore mouth or throat | ❖ Dry mouth |
| ❖ Changes in taste or smell | ❖ Dental or gum problems |
| ❖ Nausea/vomiting | ❖ Diarrhea |
| ❖ Constipation | ❖ Fatigue and/or depression |

Be sure to let your doctor know if you have any of these problems. Oftentimes medications can help. In addition, changing what you eat may improve side effects. Your dietitian can give you ideas as to what foods work best for your specific concerns.

Here are some nutrition tips to keep in mind **during** treatment:

- ❖ If your appetite is poor, plan to have **5-6 small meals** every day.
- ❖ Focus on foods that are high in **protein**. Examples include milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, beans, peas, lentils, soybeans, soy milk, tofu, peanut butter, hummus, and nuts.
- ❖ Experiment with new foods every day. Taste preferences can change rapidly, and you might find new favorites.
- ❖ Try liquid meal replacements, like **Ensure, Boost, or Carnation Instant Breakfast** - these provide extra calories and protein.
- ❖ Remember to drink plenty of fluids, especially on days when you don't feel like eating. Aim for **8 to 10 cups per day**.

Sometimes nutrition recommendations during cancer treatment are quite different from the usual guidelines for healthy eating. This can be very confusing. Meeting with your dietitian can help you learn what foods work best for your specific concerns.

To schedule an appointment, please **call 919-966-2330** or ask your doctor for a nutrition referral. Remember, a nutrition visit can take place during your chemotherapy visit or on the same day as a regular doctor's visit.

There is **no charge** for nutrition visits, so please take advantage of this **FREE** service for patients dealing with cancer.

Your outpatient oncology dietitian:

Aimee Shea, MPH, RD, CSO, LDN

Phone: (919) 966-2330

Pager: (919) 216-6684

Email: ashea@unch.unc.edu