

Mary's Reality Based Nutrition

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food" Hippocrates

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Nutrition Tips During Chemotherapy

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During chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy maintaining a healthy immune system should be your goal. Diet, exercise and stress management can help you attain this.

Because you are an individual, not a statistic, your cancer experience will be different from anyone else's. Keeping a food diary will be very important. Write down the foods you eat each day. Add how you felt physically, emotionally and if you had any symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, or pain. When you experience the same side effect the next day or week go back and compare the foods you have eaten. This will help you build a list of foods that work for you and which to avoid.

Here are a few tips to help you during treatment. Pick what works for you.

- **Changes in taste & smell. A metallic taste is the most common.**

Avoid: Red meat & food with strong odors. Any foods that are unappealing to you at this time.

Eat: Add flavor to your food with spices. Broiled or baked mild flavored meats: chicken, turkey, & fish. Try flavoring your water with lemon, cucumber and or mint.

Tips: Use plastic or wooden utensils; glass or ceramic cooking pots. Avoid metal utensils, canned foods, and metal pots & pans

- **Constipation**

Avoid: Processed foods, white foods (rice, bread, and pasta), red meat & dairy.

Eat: High fiber foods such as whole grains, beans, nut butters, vegetables (the lowly radish is very high in fiber & a natural detox food), & fruits. A fresh whole pear, kiwi, or prunes eaten an hour before breakfast will keep you regular. If you prefer, a glass of warm water with lemon juice first thing every morning helps to keep you moving as well.

Tips: Keeping yourself hydrated is very important. Fiber requires fluids. Herbal teas such as *Smooth Move* by Traditional Medicinals & *Get Regular* by Yogi Tea, are safe to use. Have one cup each evening.

- **Diarrhea**

Avoid: Sugary drinks including fruit juices, greasy & fried foods, dairy, alcohol & spicy foods.

Eat: Eat potassium and sodium rich foods such as miso soup, bananas, peaches, & white potatoes. Low fiber foods are needed in this case: white rice, pasta, low fiber bread, cream of wheat. Baked or broiled lean meats.

Tips: Have all foods at room temperature. Increase your water intake to replace the fluids you lose. Chamomile, ginger or mint tea will help settle the stomach.

- **Loss of appetite.**

Avoid: Processed foods, added sugar, sodas, & foods with strong odors.

Eat: High calorie, nutrient dense snacks. Nut butter on whole grain bread or crackers, small portion of turkey, chicken or fish, avocado, whole fruits (fruit juice is too high in sugar without the fiber), hummus, oatmeal, nuts & seeds.

Tips: Eating small meals & grab & go snacks frequently during the day will work better than the traditional 3 meals. By eating 6 to 8 snacks/meals a day you will take in more calories. Ginger chews or tea 2- 3 times a day will stimulate your appetite. A drop of orange oil on your napkin will also stimulate your appetite!

- **Mouth sores.**

Avoid: Spicy foods, alcohol, acidic foods, rough, course or dry foods,

Eat: Soft foods, mashed yams/potatoes, smoothies, oatmeal, bananas & applesauce. Pureed fruits, vegetables & meats if the sores are causing difficulty with swallowing.

Tips: Eating a tablespoon of dark honey slowly (Manuka honey is very beneficial) will not only coat your mouth and throat, it will promote healing. Sip water frequently, keeping your mouth moist. Rinse your mouth with salt water after each meal.

- **Nausea**

Avoid: Strong odors, greasy & fried foods, sugar laden drinks & foods.

Eat: Warm cereals, soups & low fat protein foods; skinned chicken & tempeh for example. Ginger chews or crystalized ginger helps with all types of nausea.

Tips: Small meals or snacks. Hydrate! Being dehydrated can cause nausea & headaches. Drinking mint or ginger teas during the day also relieves nausea. Keep crackers at your bedside or in your purse along with the ginger chews.

- **Thrush: An oral yeast infection caused by candida albicans.**

Avoid: Sugar (all types) and yeast-containing foods. Foods such as bread, beer and wine encourage candida growth. Avoid sprouted whole grains. Kambucha is popular but should also be avoided in cases of thrush. Dairy; butter, milk, cheese & yogurt.

Eat: Garlic, 1 clove, raw if tolerated, per day. Eggs, avocado, nuts, & seeds. Eat lean meat; chicken, turkey, & fish. Fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, and spices (if they don't irritate your mouth).

Tips: Plain yogurt (the exception) with lactobacillus acidophilus in small amounts will act as a probiotic. It will keep your 'gut buddies' healthy. An alternative to the yogurt is to take a dairy free probiotic daily. If you are having difficulty swallowing consider pureeing your meals.

- **Weight Loss: Maintaining your weight is important. Here are some tips to help you.**

Eating small meals/snacks 8 to 10 times a day helps get those calories in. Make each one nutrient dense and high in calories and protein. Put together several “grab & go” snack bags to carry with you to appointments or for that long chemo day.

- **Nuts**
- **Seeds**
- **Whole grain crackers**
- **String cheese in one serving packages**
- **Baby Bell cheese in one serving packages**
- **Cut up veggies: carrots, celery, avocado; high in fiber and nutrient dense.**
- **Fruits: apples, oranges, pears, berries; all are high in antioxidants, fiber & are nutrient dense.**
- **Whole grain cereal: remember doing this for small children when on an errand?**
- **Nut butter that comes in small one serving packages for those crackers & veggies.**

This is a very good resource for you. It covers side effects from different cancer treatments & how to deal with them. It is very thorough. There is also a nice section on Food Safety for cancer patients. Well worth a read & book marking it.

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center: [Eating Well During and After Your Cancer Treatment](#) “This information will help you maintain your nutrition during and after your cancer treatment. Good nutrition is very important for people with cancer. There may be some nutritional changes you can make now that will help you during treatment. Start by eating a healthy diet. This can make you stronger, help you maintain your weight, and help you fight infection. It may even help with the side effects of treatment.”