

NETCARE  
cancer care

# Eating Hints

Before, during and after  
cancer treatment

*My  
Story*

Providing **YOU** with the best and safest care



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## What you should know about cancer treatment, eating well and eating problems

People with cancer have different dietary needs

People with cancer often need to follow diets different from what one would think of as healthy. For most people, a healthy diet includes:

- Lots of fruits, vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals
- Modest amounts of meat and milk products
- Small amounts of fat, sugar, alcohol and salt

When you are healthy, eating enough food is often not a problem, but when you are dealing with cancer and treatment, this can be a real challenge. It is important to eat to keep up your strength to deal with the side effects of treatment.

When you have cancer, you may need extra protein and calories. At times, your diet may need to include extra milk, cheese and eggs. If you have trouble chewing and swallowing, you may need to add sauces and gravies. Sometimes, you may need to eat low fibre foods instead of those with high fibre. A dietitian can help you with any diet changes you may need to make.

Cancer treatments are designed to kill cancer cells, but treatment can also damage healthy cells which can cause side effects that lead to eating problems.

Common eating problems during cancer treatment include:

- Appetite loss
- Changes in taste or smell
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Sore mouth
- Sore throat and trouble swallowing
- Vomiting
- Weight gain

Everyone is different

Because everyone is different, there is no way to know if you will have eating problems and, if so, how bad they will be. You may have just a few problems or none.

In part, this depends on the type of cancer you have, where it is in your body, what kind of treatment you are receiving, how long treatment lasts and the doses of treatment you receive.

There are many helpful medicines and other ways to manage eating problems during treatment. Tell your oncologist or nurse right away if you start to have eating problems. They can tell you more about the types of eating problems you might expect and ways to manage them.

If you are already on a special diet for diabetes, kidney, heart disease or other health problems, it is even more important to speak with your oncologist – they can advise you on following your special diet while coping with eating problems caused by cancer treatment.

Ways to get the most from food and drinks

During treatment, you will have good and bad days when it comes to food. Here are some ways to manage:

- Eat plenty of protein and calories when you can. This helps you keep up your strength and rebuild tissues harmed by cancer treatment.
- Eat when you have an appetite. For many people, this is in the morning. You might want to eat a bigger meal early in the day and drink liquid meal replacements later.
- It's okay if you feel like you can't eat different foods. Eat the foods that sound good until you can eat more, even if it's the same thing again and again. You might also drink liquid meal replacements for extra nutrition.

- Drink plenty of liquids. Drinking a lot helps your body get the liquid it needs. It is even more important to drink plenty of liquid on days you cannot eat.

Most adults should drink 8 to 12 cups of liquid a day. If you keep a water bottle nearby, you may find this easier to do. Also, try some of the clear liquids listed at the end of this booklet.

Taking special care with food, to avoid infections

Some cancer treatments can make you prone to infections. When this happens, you need to take special care handling and preparing food. Be careful to:

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold
- Put leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as you have finished eating
- Scrub all raw fruit and vegetables with a brush and water before eating them
- Soak berries and other foods that are not easily scrubbed in water, then rinse
- Scrub fruit and vegetables that have rough surfaces and peels like melons, oranges and avocados with a brush and water before you cut or peel them
- Use one cutting board for meat and another one for fruit and vegetables
- Thaw meat, chicken and fish in the refrigerator or defrost them in the microwave. Cook meat, chicken and eggs thoroughly. Eggs should be hard, not runny. Meats should not have any pink inside
- Make sure your juices and milk products are pasteurized
- Eat nuts that are shelled and roasted

Do not:

- Eat raw fish or shellfish like sushi and uncooked oysters
- Eat raw nuts
- Use foods, condiments or drinks that are past their freshness date
- Eat at buffets, salad bars or self-service restaurants
- Eat foods that show signs of mould, including mouldy cheeses such as blue cheese and Roquefort

- Eat any perishable foods that have been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours
- Eat leftovers that have been in the refrigerator longer than 3 days
- Leave meat, chicken or fish sitting out to thaw

Using food, vitamins, and other supplements to fight cancer

Tell your oncologist or nurse about any vitamin, mineral, dietary supplements or herbs you are already taking or plan to take. Also, discuss any special diet you are on with your oncologist.

Be kind to yourself

- Eat your favourite foods on days you feel well.
- Relax, meditate or pray. These activities help many people feel calm and less stressed.
- Get enough rest. Make sure you get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.
- During the day, spend time doing quiet activities like reading or watching movies.
- Do not push yourself to do too much or more than you can manage. Look for easier ways to do your daily tasks. Many people feel better when they ask for, or accept, help from others.
- Be active each day. Studies show that many people feel better when they take short walks or do light exercise each day. Being active like this can also help to improve your appetite.



## Appetite Loss

### What is it?

Appetite loss is when you do not want to eat or do not feel like eating very much. It is a common problem that occurs because of cancer and its treatment. You may have appetite loss for just 1 or 2 days, or throughout the course of your treatment.

### Why it happens

No one knows just what causes appetite loss. Reasons may include:

- The cancer itself
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Your medicine
- Stress, fear, depression and/or anxiety
- Cancer treatment side effects such as nausea, vomiting, constipation or changes in how foods taste or smell

### Ways to manage with food

- Drink a liquid or powdered meal replacement like an "instant breakfast," when you are finding it difficult to eat.
- Eat five or six smaller meals each day, instead of three large meals. Many people find that it is easier to eat smaller meals more often, which can also keep you from feeling too full.
- Keep snacks nearby for when you feel like eating. Take easy-to-carry snacks such as nuts, granola bars or dried fruit when you go out.
- Add extra protein and calories to your diet. You can find ways to add protein and calories listed at the end of this booklet.
- Drink liquids throughout the day – especially when you do not want to eat. If you have trouble remembering to drink, set a reminder to take frequent sips.
- Choose liquids that add calories and other nutrients. Examples include juice, soup, milk and soy-based drinks with protein.
- Eat a bedtime snack. Doing so adds extra calories, but won't affect your appetite for the next meal.
- Change the form of your food. For instance, you might make a fruit milkshake instead of eating a piece of fruit.



## Constipation

### What is it?

Constipation occurs when bowel movements become less frequent and stools become hard, dry, and difficult to pass. It can cause you to have painful bowel movements, feel bloated, or have nausea. You may also belch, pass a lot of gas and have stomach cramps or pressure in the rectum.

### Why it happens

Chemotherapy, the location of the cancer, pain medication, and other medicines can cause constipation. It can also happen when you do not drink enough liquids, do not eat enough fibre, or are not active.

### Ways to manage with food

- Drink plenty of liquids. Drink at least 8 cups of liquids each day. One cup is equal to 250ml. Drink hot liquids. Many people find that drinking warm or hot liquids (such as coffee, tea, and soup) can help relieve constipation.
- Eat high fibre foods. These include wholegrain breads and cereals, dried fruits, cooked dried beans or peas.
- People with certain types of cancer should not eat a lot of fibre. Check with your oncologist before adding fibre to your diet.
- Be active each day. Being active can help prevent and relieve constipation. Talk with your oncologist about how active you should be and what kind of exercise to do.
- Tell your oncologist or nurse if you have not had a bowel movement in two days.



## Diarrhoea

### What is it?

Diarrhoea occurs when you have frequent bowel movements that may be soft, loose, or watery. Foods and liquids pass through the bowel so quickly that your body cannot absorb enough nutrition, vitamins, minerals and water from them. This can cause dehydration (when your body has too little water). Diarrhoea can be mild or severe and last a short or long time.

### Why it happens

Diarrhoea can be caused by cancer treatments such as radiation therapy to the abdomen or pelvis, chemotherapy or immunotherapy. These treatments cause diarrhoea because they can harm healthy cells in the lining of your large and small bowel. Diarrhoea can also be caused by infections, medicine used to treat constipation or antibiotics.

### Ways to manage with food

- Drink plenty of fluids to replace those you lose from diarrhoea and to prevent dehydration. Examples include water, ginger ale and sports drinks such as Energade®. A list of clear liquids is provided at the end of this booklet.
- Let carbonated drinks lose their fizz before you drink them. Add extra water if drinks make you thirsty or sick.
- Eat five or six small meals each day instead of three large meals. Many people find it easier to eat less food more often.
- Eat low fibre foods. Low fibre foods include, white toast and white rice.
- Have food and drink at room temperature (not too hot or too cold).

Avoid foods or drinks that may make diarrhoea worse. Examples include:

- Foods high in fibre, like wholewheat breads and pasta.
- Drinks that have a lot of sugar like regular soda and fruit punch.
- Very hot or very cold drinks.
- Greasy, fatty or fried foods like french fries and hamburgers.
- Food and drink can cause gas. These include cooked dried beans and raw fruit and vegetables.
- Milk products unless they are low-lactose or lactose-free.
- Beer, wine and other types of alcohol.
- Spicy foods, such as pepper, hot sauce, salsa and chilli.
- Foods or drinks with caffeine. These include regular coffee, tea, some sodas and chocolate.
- Sugar-free products that are sweetened with xylitol or sorbitol. These are found mostly in sugar-free gums and candy. Read product labels to find out if they have sweeteners in them.
- Apple juice, since it is high in sorbitol.
- Drink only clear liquids for 12 to 14 hours after a bout of diarrhoea. Doing so allows your bowel to rest and helps replace lost fluids.

## Dry Mouth

### What is it?

Dry mouth occurs when you have less saliva than you used to. Having less saliva can make it harder to talk, chew, and swallow food. Dry mouth can also change the way food tastes.

### Why it happens

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy to the head or neck area can damage the glands that make saliva. Immunotherapy and some medicines can also cause dry mouth.

### Ways to manage with food

- Sip water throughout the day. This can help moisten your mouth, which can help you swallow and talk. Many people carry water bottles with them.
- Eat and drink very sweet or tart foods and drinks (such as lemonade). Tart foods and drinks help you make more saliva. But if you have a sore mouth or throat, avoid tart foods and drinks as they might make these problems worse.
- Chew gum or suck on hard candy, frozen fruit, popsicles and ice chips. These help make saliva, which moistens your mouth. Choose sugar-free gum or candy since too much sugar can cause cavities in your teeth.
- Eat foods that are easy to swallow. Try pureed cooked foods or soups. You can find a list of foods and drinks that are easy to chew and swallow at the end of this booklet.
- Moisten food with sauce, gravy or salad dressing to make it easier to swallow.

### Other ways to manage

- Keep your lips moist with lip balm.
- Rinse your mouth every one to two hours with a warm water rinse. There are many examples for saltwater rinses, here is one: mix four teaspoons of salt with one cup of warm water (250ml) followed by a plain water rinse.

### Avoid:

- Drinking alcohol, including beer and wine, as alcohol can make your mouth even drier
- Foods that can hurt your mouth like foods that are very spicy, sour, salty, hard or crunchy
- Mouthwash that has alcohol. Alcohol makes a dry mouth worse
- Tobacco products
- Second-hand smoke



## Nausea

### What is it?

Nausea can keep you from getting the food and nutrients you need. Nausea occurs when you feel queasy or sick, it may be followed by vomiting (throwing up), but not always. Not everyone gets nausea, and those who might feel so after a treatment or a few days later. Speak with your oncologist if the nausea doesn't go away once treatment ends.

### Why it happens

Nausea can be a side effect of surgery, chemotherapy, immunotherapy and radiation therapy to the abdomen, small intestine, colon or brain. It can also be caused by certain types of cancer or other illnesses.

### Ways to manage with food

- Eat foods that are easy on your stomach. These include white toast, plain or vanilla yoghurt and clear broth. Try lemon, lime, or other tart flavoured foods. View more ideas that are easy on the stomach at the end of this booklet.
- Eat five or six small meals each day instead of three large meals. Many people find it easier to eat smaller amounts more often.
- Do not skip meals and snacks. Even if you do not feel hungry, you should still eat. For many people, having an empty stomach makes nausea worse.
- Choose foods that appeal to you. Do not force yourself to eat any food that makes you feel sick. At the same time, do not eat your favourite foods, so you don't link them to feeling sick.
- Sip only small amounts of liquids during meals. Eating and drinking at the same time can make you feel bloated.
- Drink liquids throughout the day. Drink slowly. Keep a water bottle or cup with a lid and straw handy.
- Eat and drink foods and beverages that are at room temperature. Let hot foods and drinks cool down, and cold foods

and drinks warm-up before you eat or drink them. You can cool hot foods and drinks by adding ice or warm-up cold foods in a microwave.

- Eat dry toast or crackers before getting out of bed if you are nauseous in the morning.
- Plan when it is best for you to eat and drink. Some people feel better when they eat a light meal or snack before treatment. Others feel better when they don't eat for a few hours before treatment.

### Other ways to manage

- Relax before each cancer treatment. Many people relax with quiet activities like reading or listening to music. You may feel better if you try deep breathing, meditation or prayer.
- Rest after meals, but do so sitting up, not lying down.
- Wear clothes that are comfortable and loose.
- Keep a record of when you feel nauseous and why. Share this with your nurse or oncologist. They might suggest ways to change your diet.
- Avoid strong-smelling food and drinks. These include foods like fish, onions and garlic. Ask a friend or family member to cook for you to help avoid strong cooking smells.
- Fresh air can help relieve nausea. Open a window or turn on a fan if your living area feels stuffy. Be sure not to eat in rooms that are too warm or stuffy.



## Sore Mouth (Mucositis)

### What is it?

Radiation therapy to the head or neck, chemotherapy and immunotherapy can cause mouth sores (little cuts or ulcers in your mouth) and tender gums. Dental problems or mouth infections, such as thrush, can also make your mouth sore.

### Why it happens

Cancer treatments can harm the fast-growing cells in the lining of your mouth and lips. Your mouth and gums will most likely feel better once your cancer treatment ends.

### Ways to manage with food

- Choose foods that are easy to chew. Certain foods can hurt a sore mouth and make it harder to chew and swallow. To help, choose soft foods like milkshakes, scrambled eggs and custards.
- Cook foods until they are soft and tender.
- Moisten and soften foods with gravy, sauces, broth or yoghurt.
- Cut food into small pieces. You can also puree foods using a blender or food processor.
- Drink with a straw. This can help push the drinks beyond the painful parts of your mouth.
- Eat with a very small spoon, like a baby spoon. This will help you take smaller bites, which may be easier to chew.
- Eat cold or room temperature food. Your mouth may hurt more if your food is too hot.
- Suck on ice chips. Ice may help numb and soothe your mouth.
- Avoid foods and drinks that can hurt when your mouth is sore.  
**These include:**
  - Citrus fruits and juices, such as oranges, lemons and lemonade.
  - Spicy foods, such as hot sauces, curry dishes, salsa and chilli peppers.
  - Tomatoes and ketchup
  - Salty foods

- Raw vegetables
- Sharp, crunchy foods like granola, crackers and potato/tortilla chips
- Drinks that contain alcohol

### Other ways to manage

- Visit a dentist at least two weeks before starting immunotherapy, chemotherapy or radiation therapy to the head or neck. It is important to have a healthy mouth before starting cancer treatment. Try to get all needed dental work done before your treatment starts. If you can't, ask your oncologist or nurse when it will be safe to go to the dentist. Tell your dentist that you have cancer and the type of treatment you are getting.
- Rinse your mouth three to four times a day with a saltwater rinse. There are many examples for saltwater rinses, here is one: mix four teaspoons of salt with one cup of warm water (250ml) followed by a plain water rinse.
- Check for any sores, white patches or puffy and red areas in your mouth every day. This way, you can see or feel problems as soon as they start. Tell your oncologist if you notice these changes.
- **Do not use items that can hurt or burn your mouth like:**
  - Mouthwash that contains alcohol
  - Toothpicks or other sharp objects
  - Cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco products
  - Beer, wine, liquor, or other types of alcohol
- Tell your oncologist and dentist if your mouth or gums are sore. They can figure out whether this is from treatment or dental problems. Ask the dentist about special products to clean and soothe sore teeth and gums
- Ask your oncologist about medicine for pain. They may suggest lozenges or sprays that numb your mouth while eating

## Sore throat and trouble swallowing (Oesophagitis)

### What is it?

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy to the head and neck can make the lining of your throat inflamed and sore, a problem called oesophagitis. It may feel like you have a lump in your throat or that your chest or throat is burning. You may also have trouble swallowing. These problems may make it hard to eat and cause weight loss.

### Why it happens

Some types of chemotherapy and radiation to the head and neck can harm fast-growing cells, such as those in the lining of your throat. Your risk for a sore throat, trouble swallowing or other throat problems depends on:

- How much radiation you are getting
- If you are getting chemotherapy and radiation therapy at the same time
- Whether you use tobacco or drink alcohol during your course of cancer treatment

### Ways to manage with food

- Eat five or six small meals or snacks each day instead of three large meals. Many people find it easier to eat a smaller amount of food more often.
- Choose foods that are easy to swallow. Some foods are hard to chew and swallow. To help, choose soft foods like milkshakes, scrambled eggs and cooked cereal. For other ideas, see a list at the end of this booklet.
- Choose foods and drinks that are high in protein and calories. See how to add extra calories and protein to your food at the end of this booklet.
- Cook foods until they are soft and tender.
- Cut food into small pieces. You can also puree foods using a blender or food processor.
- Moisten and soften foods with gravy, sauces, broth or yoghurt.

- Sip drinks through a straw. Drinking through a straw may make it easier to swallow.
- **Avoid foods and drinks that can burn or scrape your throat like:**
  - Hot foods and drinks
  - Spicy foods
  - Foods and juices that are high in acid like tomatoes, oranges and lemonade
  - Sharp, crunchy foods like potato/tortilla chips
  - Drinks that contain alcohol

### Tell your oncologist or nurse if you:

- Have trouble swallowing
- Feel as if you are choking
- Cough while eating or drinking

### Other ways to manage

- Sit upright and bend your head slightly forward when eating or drinking and stay sitting or standing upright for at least 30 minutes after eating.
- Do not use tobacco products. These include cigarettes, pipes, cigars and chewing tobacco. All of these can make your throat problems worse.
- Tell your oncologist or nurse if you have trouble swallowing, feel as if you are choking, cough while eating or drinking or notice other throat problems. Also, mention if you have pain or are losing weight. Your oncologist may prescribe medicine to help relieve these symptoms.



## Taste or smell changes

### What is it?

Food may have less taste or certain foods (like meat) may be bitter or taste like metal. Your sense of smell may also change. Sometimes, food that used to smell good no longer does.

### Why it happens

Cancer treatment, dental problems or the cancer itself can cause changes to your sense of taste or smell. Although there is no way to prevent these problems, they often get much better after treatment ends.

### Ways to manage with food

- Choose foods that look and smell good. Avoid foods that do not appeal to you. For instance, if beef tastes or smells strange, then try chicken or turkey.
- Marinate foods. You can improve the flavour of meat, chicken or fish by soaking it in a marinade.
- Try tart foods and drinks. Try recipes that contain orange, lime, lemon or vinegar. Tart lemon custard might taste good and add extra protein and calories. If you have a sore mouth or sore throat, do not eat tart foods.
- Make foods sweeter. If foods have a salty, bitter or acid taste, adding sugar or sweetener might help.
- Add extra flavour to your foods. For instance, you might add bacon bits or onion to vegetables or use herbs like basil, oregano and rosemary. You can also use barbeque sauce on meat and chicken.
- Avoid foods and drinks with smells that bother you.

### Here are some ways to help reduce food smells:

- Serve foods at room temperature
- Keep foods covered
- Use cups with lids (like travel mugs)
- Drink through a straw
- Use a kitchen fan when cooking



- Cook outdoors
- When cooking, lift lids away from you

### Other ways to manage

- Eat with plastic forks and spoons. If you have a metal taste in your mouth, eating with plastic forks and spoons can help. If you enjoy eating with chopsticks, these might help, too. Also, try cooking foods in glass pots and pans instead of metal ones.
- Keep your mouth clean. Keeping your mouth clean by brushing and flossing can help food taste better.
- Use special mouthwashes. Ask your dentist or oncologist about mouthwashes that might help, as well as other ways to care for your mouth.
- Go to the dentist. They can ensure that your altered sense of taste or smell is not from dental problems.
- Speak to your oncologist or nurse. Tell them about any changes in taste or smell and how they keep you from eating.

## Vomiting

### What is it?

Vomiting is another way to say “throwing up.”

### Why it happens

Vomiting may follow nausea. It may be caused by cancer treatment, food smells, motion, an upset stomach or bowel gas. Vomiting like nausea can occur right after treatment or one or two days later. You may also have retching which occurs when your body tries to vomit when your stomach is empty.

### Ways to manage with food

- Do not have anything to eat or drink until your vomiting stops.
- Once the vomiting stops, drink small amounts of clear liquids, like water or bouillon (broth/stock). Be sure to start slowly and take little sips at a time. You can find a list of other clear liquids at the end of this booklet.
- Once you can drink clear liquids without vomiting, try full liquid foods and drinks or those that are easy on your stomach. You can slowly add solid foods when you start feeling better. There is a list of full liquid foods at the end of this booklet.
- Eat five or six small meals each day instead of three large meals. Once you start eating, it may be easier to eat smaller amounts at a time. Do not eat your favourite foods at first, so that you do not begin to dislike them.

### Other ways to manage

- Ask your oncologist to prescribe medicine to prevent or control vomiting (antiemetics or antinausea medicines). Be sure to tell your oncologist or nurse if the medicine is not helping. Your oncologist may prescribe another. You may need to take your medicine one hour before each treatment and for a few days after. The type of cancer treatment you are receiving and how you react to it affects how long you need to take this medicine. You may also want to speak to your oncologist or nurse about acupuncture. It might also help.
- One way to prevent vomiting is to prevent nausea. You can learn more about nausea in the section on “nausea”.
- Call your oncologist if your vomiting is severe or lasts for more than one or two days.

Vomiting can lead to dehydration (which occurs when your body does not have enough water). Your oncologist needs to know if you cannot keep liquids down.

## Weight loss

### What is it?

Weight loss is when you have a decrease in body weight. Many people with cancer lose weight during treatment.

### Why it happens

Weight loss can be caused by cancer itself or by the side effects of cancer treatment, such as nausea and vomiting. Stress and worry can also cause weight loss.

### Ways to manage with food

- Eat on a schedule rather than waiting until you feel hungry. You still need to eat even if you do not feel hungry while being treated for cancer.
- Eat five or six small meals each day instead of three large meals. Many people find it easier to eat smaller amounts more often.
- Eat foods that are high in protein and calories. Do not fill up on low-calorie foods or fluids. “Powerpack” your diet by adding protein and calories to other foods. Add toppings like peanut butter, olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocado, honey and jam to all foods. For additional ideas, see the lists on adding protein and calories at the end of this booklet.
- Drink milkshakes, smoothies, juices or soups if you do not feel like eating solid foods. These can provide the protein, vitamins and calories your body needs. For other ideas, see the list of full liquid foods at the end of this booklet.

### Other ways to manage

- Be as active as you can. Studies show that many people with cancer feel better when they exercise each day. You might have more of an appetite if you take a short walk or do light exercise.
- Tell your oncologist if you have eating problems, such as nausea, vomiting or changes in how foods taste and smell. They can help control these things so that you can eat better.

## After cancer treatment

Many eating problems go away when treatment ends

Once you finish cancer treatment, many of your eating problems will get better. Some eating problems like weight loss and changes in taste or smell, may last longer than your course of treatment. If you had head and neck cancer treatment or surgery to remove part of your stomach/intestines, then eating problems may always be a part of your life.

### Ways to return to healthy eating

While healthy eating by itself cannot keep cancer from coming back, it can help you regain strength, rebuild tissue and improve how you feel after treatment ends. Here are some ways to eat well after treatment ends:

- Prepare simple meals that you like and are easy to make.
- Cook two or three meals at a time. Freeze the extras to eat later.
- Stock up on frozen dinners.
- Make cooking easy e.g., by buying cut-up vegetables.
- Eat many kinds of foods. No single food has all the vitamins and nutrients you need.
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables, including raw and cooked vegetables, fruits and fruit juices. These all have vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- Eat wholewheat bread, oats, brown rice or other whole grains and cereals. These foods have needed complex carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- Add beans, peas and lentils to your diet and eat them often.
- Go easy on fat, salt, sugar, alcohol, smoked or pickled foods and processed meats.
- Choose low-fat milk products.
- Eat small portions of lean meat and poultry without skin.
- Limit alcohol to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.





## Lists of foods and drinks

### Clear liquids

This list may help if you have appetite loss, constipation, diarrhoea or vomiting.

### Soups

- Bouillon (broth / stock)
- Clear fat-free broth

### Drinks

- Clear apple juice
- Fruit-flavoured drinks
- Sports drinks
- Weak, caffeine free tea
- Clear carbonated beverages
- Fruit punch
- Water

### Sweets

- Honey
- Jelly
- Popsicles
- Fruit ices made without fruit pieces or milk
- Bouillon (broth/stock)
- Soup that has been strained or put through a blender

### Drinks

- Carbonated drinks
- Coffee
- Fruit drinks
- Fruit punch
- Milk
- Milkshakes
- Smoothies
- Sports drinks
- Tea
- Tomato juice
- Vegetable juice
- Water

### Desserts and Snacks

- Custard (soft or baked)
- Frozen yoghurt
- Honey
- Jelly
- Fruit purees that are watered down
- Ice cream with no chunks (such as nuts or cookie pieces)
- Pudding
- Sorbet
- Syrup
- Yoghurt (plain or vanilla)

## Foods and drinks that are easy on the stomach

This list may help if you have nausea or once your vomiting is under control.

### Soups

- Clear broth (e.g., chicken, vegetable or beef)
- Most soups (strain or puree, if needed), except those made with foods that cause gas, such as dried beans and peas, broccoli or cabbage

### Drinks

- Clear carbonated drinks that have lost their fizz
- Cranberry or grape juice
- Fruit flavoured drinks
- Fruit punch
- Milk
- Sports drinks
- Tea
- Vegetable juices
- Water

### Main meals and snacks

- Avocado
- Pretzels
- Refined cold cereals
- Eggs
- Fish: poached or broiled
- White bread
- White rice
- Vegetables: tender, well-cooked
- Potatoes: without skins, boiled or baked
- Cheese: hard, mild, soft or semisoft, such as cottage cheese or cream cheese
- Chicken or turkey, broiled or baked without skin
- Peanut butter, creamy and other nut butters

### Desserts

- Bananas
- Frozen yoghurt
- Popsicles
- Sorbet
- Canned fruit like applesauce, peaches and pears
- Custard
- Ice cream
- Pudding
- Yoghurt (plain or vanilla)



## Low fibre foods

This list may help if you have appetite loss, constipation, diarrhoea or vomiting.

### Main meals

- Cooked refined cereals
- Noodles
- White rice
- Chicken (skinless and baked, broiled or grilled)
- Potatoes: without skins (boiled or baked)
- Fish
- White bread
- Eggs

### Fruits and vegetables

- Carrots, cooked
- Mushrooms
- Vegetable juice
- Canned fruit like peaches, pears, and applesauce
- Fruit juice
- Green beans, cooked

### Sweets and Snacks

- Custard
- Salty crackers
- Sorbet
- Yoghurt (plain or vanilla)
- Ginger snaps
- Sherbet
- Vanilla wafers

### Fats

- Oil
- Butter
- Salad dressing (without seeds)
- Mayonnaise



## High-fibre foods

This list may help if you have constipation or weight gain.

### Main Meals

- Bran muffins
- Bran or wholegrain cereals
- Oil
- Salad dressing (without seeds)
- Butter
- Mayonnaise
- Wholewheat bread
- Wholewheat pasta
- Cooked dried or canned peas and beans like lentils or pinto, black, red or kidney beans
- Peanut butter and other nut butters
- Soups with vegetables and beans like lentils and split pea
- Wholegrain cereals

### Fruits and Vegetables

- Apples
- Brussel sprouts
- Corn
- Potatoes with skins
- Sweet potatoes
- Dried fruit, such as apricots, dates, prunes and raisins
- Green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce and kale
- Berries e.g., blueberries, blackberries and strawberries
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Peas
- Spinach

### Snacks

- Granola
- Nuts
- Popcorn
- Trail mix
- Seeds e.g., pumpkin or sunflower

## Foods and drinks that are easy to chew and swallow

This list may help if you have dry mouth, sore mouth, sore throat or trouble swallowing.

### Main meals

- Clear broth (e.g., chicken, vegetable or beef)
- Most soups (strain or puree, if needed), except those made with foods that cause gas, such as dried beans and peas, broccoli or cabbage

### Drinks

- Baby food
- Chicken salad
- Cottage cheese
- Egg salad
- Mashed potatoes
- Soups
- Tuna salad
- Casseroles
- Cooked refined cereals
- Eggs, soft boiled or scrambled

### Main meals and snacks

- Avocado
- Pretzels
- Refined cold cereals
- Eggs
- Fish: poached or broiled
- White bread
- White rice
- Vegetables: tender, well-cooked
- Potatoes: without skins, boiled or baked
- Cheese: hard, mild, soft or semisoft, such as cottage cheese or cream cheese
- Chicken or turkey, broiled or baked without skin

- Peanut butter, creamy and other nut butters
- Eggs, soft boiled or scrambled
- Macaroni and cheese
- Peanut butter
- Stews
- Custard

### Desserts and Snacks

- Flan
- Ice cream
- Puddings
- Smoothies
- Soft fruits e.g., bananas or applesauce
- Yoghurt, plain or vanilla
- Fruit, pureed or baby food
- Milkshakes
- Sherbet
- Sorbet



## Quick and easy snacks

This list may help if you have appetite loss.

### Drinks

- Chocolate milk
- Juices
- Milkshakes
- Instant breakfast drinks
- Milk

### Main Meals

- Bread
- Cheese, hard or semisoft
- Cream soups
- Muffins
- Pita bread and hummus
- Peanut butter and other nut butters

### Fruits and Vegetables

- Applesauce
- Vegetables: raw or cooked
- Fresh or canned fruit

### Desserts and Snacks

- Custard
- Granola
- Ice cream
- Popcorn
- Trail mix
- Cakes and cookies made with wholegrains, fruits, nuts or granola
- Frozen yoghurt
- Granola bars
- Nuts
- Sorbet
- Yoghurt

Dips made with cheese, beans, or sour cream

## Ways to add protein

This list may help if you have appetite loss, sore throat, trouble swallowing or weight loss.

### Hard or Semisoft Cheese

- **Melt cheese on:**
  - Bread
  - Muffins
  - Tortillas
  - Hamburgers
  - Hot dogs
  - Meat and fish
  - Vegetables
  - Eggs
  - Desserts
  - Stewed fruit
- **Pies**
- **Grate and add to:**
  - Soups
  - Sauces
  - Noodles
  - Muffins
  - Hamburgers
  - Meat and fish
  - Eggs
  - Stewed fruit

### Milk

- Use milk instead of water in drinks and in cooking
- Use in hot cereal, soups, cocoa, and pudding

### Eggs

- Add chopped hard-boiled eggs to salads, salad dressings, vegetables,
- Casseroles
- Mashed potatoes
- Noodles
- Vegetable dishes
- Rice
- Make a rich custard with eggs, milk and sugar
- Beat eggs into mashed potatoes, pureed vegetables, and sauces. Make sure to keep cooking after adding the eggs because raw eggs may contain harmful bacteria.

### • Add extra eggs or egg whites to:

- Custard
- Puddings
- Quiches
- Scrambled eggs
- Omelette'

### Nuts and Seeds

- **Add to:**
  - Casseroles
  - Breads
  - Muffins
  - Pancakes
  - Cookies
  - Waffles
- **Sprinkle on:**
  - Fruit
  - Ice cream
  - Toast
  - Cereal
  - Yoghurt

### Peanut Butter and Other Nut Butters

- **Spread on:**
  - Sandwiches
  - Muffins
  - Waffles
  - Fruit slices
  - Toast
  - Crackers
  - Pancakes
  - Use as a dip for raw vegetables
  - Blend with milk and other drinks
  - Swirl through soft ice cream and yoghurt

### Meat, Poultry and Fish

- **Add chopped, cooked meat or fish to:**
  - Vegetables
  - Casseroles
  - Sauces
  - Soufflés
  - Sandwich fillings
  - Salads
  - Soups
  - Omelettes
  - Quiches

## Way to add calories

This list may help if you have appetite loss, a sore throat, trouble swallowing or weight loss.

### Milk

- Use full cream milk instead of low fat
- Put on hot or cold cereal
- Pour on chicken and fish while baking
- Make hot chocolate with milk

### Cheese

- Melt on top of casseroles, potatoes and vegetables
- Add to omelettes
- Add to sandwiches

Dried fruits, such as raisins, prunes, apricots, dates and figs

Soak them in warm water to plump them, and eat for breakfast, dessert or snack

- **Add to:**
  - Muffins
  - Breads
  - Rice and grain dishes
  - Puddings
  - Cookies
  - Cakes
  - Cereals
  - Stuffings

### Eggs

- Add chopped hard-boiled eggs to salads, salad dressings, vegetables and casseroles.
- Make a rich custard with eggs, milk and sugar.
- Beat eggs into mashed potatoes, pureed vegetables and sauces. Make sure to keep cooking these dishes after adding the eggs because raw eggs may contain harmful bacteria.
- Add extra eggs or egg whites to:
  - Custards
  - Quiches
  - Omelettes
  - Puddings
  - Scrambled eggs
  - Pancake or French toast batter

## References:

National Cancer Institute. Eating Hints: Before, during, and after Cancer Treatment. Accessed 12 November 2018. Available from <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/eating-hints>

### Every cancer story is unique

In the same way that no two fingerprints are the same, two people may have the same diagnosis but they will respond completely differently.

Netcare recognises that everyone will have their own fears, and their own coping mechanisms. The way we live and the way we feel, create a unique outcome, which is impossible to determine beforehand. It means we can each take charge over the process. We are not beholden to statistical data. We are not linear. We are organic. We are individual. Just like our fingerprints. Netcare's approach is designed with this in mind. Not the other way round.

[www.netcarehospitals.co.za](http://www.netcarehospitals.co.za)

Disclaimer: The information contained in this booklet is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health professional with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.





*My  
Story*

Netcare Cancer Care Eating Hints  
Before, during and after cancer treatment