

# NUTRITION'S ROLE IN FIGHTING CANCER

**Fighting cancer can be likened to waging a war. To win the war, physicians utilize many weapons. Their arsenal shouldn't fail to include the vital role of nutrition.**

This resource is intended to help your patients to better understand the importance of healthy eating for cancer prevention and to nourish the body during cancer treatment.

## 01 | You Are What You Eat

Eating a balanced diet is important for overall health, but is even more critical for those undergoing cancer treatment. Note some of the benefits of each of the following food categories:

- **Proteins:** Extra protein after chemotherapy or radiation treatment helps heal tissues and fight infection. Some examples of good sources of protein include fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and lentils.
- **Fats:** Consuming the right fats, such as monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, provide a rich source of energy for the body. Examples include olive oil, safflower oil and flaxseed oil.
- **Carbohydrates:** Carbs fuel your body and ensure proper organ function. Be sure to choose the right types of carbohydrates including fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- **Water:** It cannot be stressed enough how vital water is to overall health, especially to those suffering with an acute illness. Cancer treatments can sometimes cause vomiting and diarrhea, which lead to dehydration. It is therefore extremely important to replenish your body with 6-8 glasses of water each day.

## 02 | Easing the Side Effects of Treatment

Unfortunately, there may be some discomfort associated with some cancer treatments. Adjusting your diet may provide some relief. For example, nausea can be reduced by choosing a bland diet. If your treatment has caused mouth sores, try pureeing your food to make it easier to swallow. Limiting your

diet to rice, bananas and apples during bouts of diarrhea can ease symptoms; whereas, increasing fiber can help eliminate constipation.

## 03 | Supplements – A Word of Caution

In addition to the food categories listed above, your medical provider may recommend the use of supplements, such as antioxidants or phytonutrients. Be sure to follow your physician's directions carefully and report any side effects immediately. Supplements should be used only if recommended by your medical provider.

## 04 | The Road to Recovery

Following your medical provider's plan of care, drinking plenty of water, eating the right types of foods as outlined above, and avoiding foods high in sugar, trans fats, additives and empty calories are critical elements in winning the battle against cancer.

To learn more about nutrition and cancer treatment, visit:

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorshipduringandaftertreatment/nutritionforpeoplewithcancer/index>

*Did You Know? Eating one portion of fruit and/or veggies each day can cut the risk of mouth cancer by 50%*

## References

<http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20430736,00.html>  
[http://www.cancernutrition.com/fork\\_lecture.htm](http://www.cancernutrition.com/fork_lecture.htm)  
<http://www.webmd.com/cancer/nutrition-cancer-12/eating-treatment?page=1>