The Role of Food In Cancer Treatment

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Objectives

• Role of nutrition
• Tips for treatment related side effects
• Food safety
• When I don’t feel like eating
Nutrition is like a big picture

Claude Monet - Field of Yellow Irises at Giverny
Role of Nutrition During Treatment

Why is nutrition important?

• Better tolerate treatment-related side effects

• Preserve lean body mass (muscle)

• Maintain weight and body’s stores of nutrients

• Protect immune function

• Aid in recovery and healing
Protein Foods

Why is protein important?

- Protein needs are often higher during cancer treatments
- Needed for growth, repair of body tissues, immune health
- Maintain lean body mass

Good sources of Protein

- Fish
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Dairy products
- Nuts and nut butters
- Dried beans, peas, lentils, soy foods
Carbohydrates and Fat

Why is this important?

- Our body’s sources for fuel
  - Organ, central nervous system, brain, and muscles
- Vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals
- Complex vs. simple carbohydrates
- Fat - absorbs fat soluble vitamins, stores energy, and provides essential fatty acids

Good sources

- Whole grains
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Olive/canola oils
- Avocados
- Nut butters
- Tuna, salmon, etc.
Phytochemicals
The cancer fighters in the foods we eat

• Phytochemicals- naturally occurring plant chemicals

• Research has shown that phytochemicals may:
  - Boost the immune system
  - Prevent DNA damage
  - Slow down the growth rate of cancer cells
How to Get More Phytochemicals?

When you’re feeling good: Plant based diet

- Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans
- Aim for brightly colored and strongly flavored fruits and vegetables
- **Bottom line:** Eat a rainbow!
  - Whole foods first
I heard the more colorful your salad is, the better it is for you. So, I swapped my croutons for M&M's!
What to Do about Treatment Related Side Effects

• It’s OK to modify your diet during treatment

• Eat the foods that sound and taste good to you

• Plan ahead (pre-made snacks, frozen meals)

• Ask family and friends for help when you need to
Nutrition Tips and Tricks

Possible side effects from treatments:

• Decrease in appetite
• Nausea
• Taste and smell changes
• Constipation or diarrhea
• Mouth sores
Smoothie Recipe

Packed with nutrients, calories, and protein!

• ¾ cup of 2% milk (or whole milk)

• ¼ cup of 100% fruit juice (V8 blueberry pomegranate juice)

• 5 oz. full-fat plain greek yogurt

• ½ cup of frozen or fresh blueberries

• ½ banana

• Yields: ~10 oz.
Decrease in Appetite

• Eat small frequent meals and snacks - eat by the clock

• If unintentional weight loss occurs → add extra calories and protein to all foods
  - Every bite counts!

• Drink most fluids in between meals instead of with meals

• Eat your favorite foods anytime

• Try high calorie/protein shakes
Nausea

• Eat every 2-3 hours

• Sip on fluids throughout the day

• Eat bland, dry type foods
  - Crackers, toast, dry cereal, breadsticks

• Properties of ginger

What to Avoid?

• Greasy, fatty, or spicy foods

• Foods that are odor causing
  - Try eating cooler temperature foods vs. hot temperature foods
  - Remove yourself from cooking environment for hot foods
Taste and Smell Changes

- Choose foods with tart flavors
  - Lemon or Italian dressing marinades, tomato based dishes
- Add fruit to smoothies or yogurt
- Eat frozen cantaloupe, watermelon, or orange slices
- Suck on sugar-free lemon drops or mints
- Experiment with different herbs and spices
Constipation

• Drink plenty of fluids
  - Hot beverages, hot cereals

• Slowly incorporate fiber into diet
  - Vegetables and fruit with skins
  - Choose whole grains whenever you can
    • Whole wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice, popcorn

• Exercise per your doctor’s recommendations
Diarrhea

- Drink plenty of clear liquids
- Eat several small meals/snacks
- Foods that contain pectin
  - Applesauce, bananas
- Refined grains vs. whole grains
- Skinless fruits and vegetables

What to Avoid?
- Greasy, fatty, or spicy foods
- Very sweet foods
- Caffeine
- Carbonated beverages
Sore Mouth

- Eat soft bland foods
- Cold or room temperature foods
- Eat frozen fruit
  - Freeze cantaloupe or watermelon balls
- Suck on fruit popsicles
- Moisten foods with cream sauce or gravy
- Make fruit flavored smoothies or milkshakes!

What to Avoid?

- Hot temperature foods
- Acidic foods
  - Citrus fruits, pineapple, coffee, tomato
- Certain spices
  - Chili powder, pepper
- Rough or crunchy foods
Food Safety Tips

Clean

• Wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water

• Wash surfaces and utensils after each use

• Wash fruits and vegetables, but not meat or poultry
Food Safety Tips

Separate- don’t cross contaminate

• Use separate cutting boards

• Place raw foods on bottom of cart and in separate bags

• Place raw foods on bottom shelf in the fridge
Food Safety Tips

Cook

• Use a food thermometer

• Red meats (beef, pork, lamb, and veal) should reach an internal temperature of 145°F

• Ground beef and poultry should reach at least 165°F.

• Whole or pieces of poultry should reach 165°F.

• Casseroles and leftovers should reach 165°F
Food Safety Tips

Chill

• Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours

• Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter

• Know when to throw food out
When I Don’t Feel Like Eating

Foods to keep in pantry

• Cream based soups
• Peanut or almond butter
• Nuts
• Dried fruit
• Granola or granola bars
• Crackers
• Beans
• Oatmeal, whole wheat bread
• Olive oil or canola oil
When I Don’t Feel Like Eating

Foods to keep in fridge

- Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables
- Milk- 2% or whole
- Milkshakes, smoothies, or instant breakfast drinks
- Yogurt
- Eggs, chicken, fish
- Cottage cheese, cream cheese, cheese sticks
- Ice cream
- Pudding cups
- Hummus
Quick and Easy Snack Ideas
Goal: Make every bite count

- Cheese on crackers
- Yogurt with granola or fruit on top
- Peanut butter on graham crackers
- Handful of trail mix
- Cheese stick
- Tuna, egg, or chicken salad on crackers
- Homemade smoothie/milkshake

- Fruit and cottage cheese
- Vegetables dipped in hummus or ranch dressing
- Pudding cup with vanilla wafers
- Pretzels dipped in cream cheese
- Granola bar
Tools you can use

What to do before treatment days:

• Stock pantry and fridge with recommended food items/ingredients

• Pre-package snacks in Ziploc bags

• Make homemade frozen meals

• Contact CulinaryCare.org to get a meal to enjoy during treatment
Resources

• American Institute for Cancer Research- AICR.org

• The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics- eatright.org

• The American Cancer Society- cancer.org

• Culinary Care- culinarycare.org

• Cook For Your Life- cookforyourlife.org

• Foodsafety.gov
Questions?

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Thank You!