

Weight Loss Prevention

Medical Management

Weight loss during cancer treatment can occur for a number of reasons. You may lose weight because food does not taste good. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or cancer itself can decrease appetite. Side effects that make eating difficult, such as a sore mouth or throat, can occur. And feelings of anxiety or depression can affect your ability to eat well. Please talk to your doctor or nurse for additional information about medical management of the symptoms that lead to weight loss if you have questions about these issues.

Using Nutrition to Help Yourself

To prevent weight loss, you will need to choose the right food, avoid things that may make it difficult to get in more nutritious food, and carefully plan your eating schedule. It is important to keep your weight stable during treatment because maintaining your weight can help you finish your treatments on time, heal faster, and feel better.

Nutrition Tips for Weight Loss

- If your symptoms and side effects prevent you from eating for more than a day or two, call your doctor or nurse right away.
- If you have lost more than 5 pounds since beginning your treatment, ask for a referral to a dietitian for additional help with nutrition issues.
- Set some times to eat, such as every one-half to one hour. Be sure to have at least one or two bites of food at each set time. Eating often is important, while quantity and type of food are less important.
- Do not wait until you are hungry to eat. Keep snacks handy and nibble food often.
- Drink most of your liquids between meals. Drink enough fluid to swallow your food comfortably, but avoid “loading” up on drinks such as water and coffee with your meals, which can make you feel fuller.
- As long as you are not nauseous, eat your favorite food any time of day.
- Stick with food that has little odor and a short cooking time. When drinking liquids, use a cup with a lid or cover to further reduce odors.
- Experiment with both hot and cold food to see what temperature is more appealing to you.

What to Eat and Drink

- Focus on convenient food, such as granola bars; fruit; nuts; yogurt; pudding; pretzels or crackers; single-serving sizes of canned fruit, tuna, or chicken; trail mix; power bars; oatmeal; hard-boiled eggs; and ice pops.
- Focus on high-calorie food, such as nuts and peanut butter.
- Use liquid nutrition products, such as Ensure or Boost, to fill in the nutrition gaps if you aren't eating well.
- Try fruit smoothies, shakes, and other quick and easy blender meals and snacks.
- Add olive oil, sesame oil, or chopped nuts and seeds for extra calories.



What to Avoid

- Forcing yourself to eat if you feel nauseous.
- Having issues about food and eating become the only focus of your interactions with family and friends.
- Putting off eating. Eating small amounts often is important.
- Gas-producing food, including beans, cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower; onions, corn, peas, cucumbers, and peppers; and some fruit, such as cantaloupe and other types of melon, and apricots, prunes, and raw apples.
- Sugar substitutes, such as Nutrasweet, Splenda, manitol, and sorbitol.
- Water, tea, diet soda, coffee, or other liquids without calories.
- Fatty, greasy, fried, and spicy food.
- Food with strong odors and “long-cooking” items, such as stews, casseroles, crock pot recipes, and baked meat or fish.