

Eating during Cancer Treatment



Question:

I am undergoing treatments for cancer and am not eating well. What should I do?

Answer:

It is good that you recognize the importance of eating well during your cancer treatment. Eating well helps support you before, during, and after treatment and helps you to complete treatment on schedule.

General answers are often simply not adequate to address the full scope of the many concerns that are unique to your situation. That is why it is helpful to seek out the registered dietitian (RD) on staff at your cancer center/clinic. Many cancer centers employ RDs who are Board Certified Specialists in Oncology Nutrition (CSO). These specialist RDs are educated to thoroughly review your medical information, discuss the particulars of your case with all appropriate members of your health care team, make an individualized nutritional plan specific to your needs, abilities, and desires, and then follow you with both encouragement and refinements in the recommendations as your situation changes.

Be proactive about asking for an appointment with an RD. Do not wait until your symptoms cause eating problems or you have lost weight.

If your cancer center does not have an RD on staff, or if you need to wait weeks to receive proactive, in-depth, individualized nutritional care within a reasonable time frame, try the following steps:

1. Visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' website (www.eatright.org) to find a local registered dietitian in private practice. Click on the link "Find an Expert" on the homepage and enter your ZIP Code to find an RD near you.

2. Search the Internet or look in your phone book for a registered dietitian in private practice (they can either be listed under Dietitians or Nutritionists).
3. Call the American Institute for Cancer Research at 800-843-8114, M-F, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST – an operator will take your question and your phone number and an AICR registered dietitian will return your call generally within 3 business days. Their free information handbook for cancer patients and survivors, *CancerResource*, can also be ordered from them or accessed online.
4. Read the book "Eating Hints: Before, during and after Cancer Treatment" by the National Cancer Institute. It is available free of charge online as well as in Kindle and ePub formats.
5. Read the book "Nutrition for the Person with Cancer During Treatment" by the American Cancer Society (ACS). Call 800-227-2345 to request a free copy or download it on their website www.cancer.org.
6. Schedule a Dietitian Consultation with PearlPoint Nutrition ServicesSM for a free one-on-one nutrition consultation with a registered dietitian with expertise in oncology nutrition. To schedule a consult, visit their website or call 877-467-1936 X 101.

The original question and answer were generously donated by Diana Dyer, MS, RD, a cancer survivor, registered dietitian, organic garlic farmer, and the author of "A Dietitian's Cancer Story: Information & Inspiration for Recovery & Healing from a 3-time Cancer Survivor."

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