

Diet and Cancer

A guide for patients with cancer



Diet and Cancer

This booklet has been written to help you understand more about diet and cancer. It has been prepared and checked by dietitians, nurses and patients. The information in this booklet is an agreed view on diet and cancer.

If you are a patient, your doctor, dietitian or nurse may like to go through the booklet with you. They can mark sections that are important for you. You can also make a note below of the contact names and information you may need quickly.



Dietitian	Tel:
Specialist nurse	Tel:
Family doctor (GP)	Tel:
Surgeon	Tel:
Medical oncologist	Tel:
Radiation oncologist	Tel:
Radiation therapist	Tel:
Medical social worker	Tel:
Speech and language therapist	Tel:
Emergency number	Tel:
Treatments	Review dates

If you like, you can also add:

Your name _____

Address _____

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Introduction

Eating well when you have cancer can help you feel better. It can make you feel strong and help you to maintain a healthy weight. It can also help you tolerate the side-effects of treatment, reduce the risk of infection, and help your recovery. This booklet has been written to help you learn more about diet and cancer. It is aimed at people with cancer at any stage. This includes newly diagnosed, during and after treatment, or when active cancer treatment has stopped.

You can read about healthy eating, the eating problems to expect from cancer treatment, and how to cope with them. There is a section on building yourself up if you have lost weight unintentionally or if you are having eating problems. There are also some tips for carers about eating and preparing food. Some advice is given about special diets and supplements as well.

It is common to have questions about which foods to eat during and after treatment. You may wonder what the best diet is for you, especially if you find it hard to eat. Will what you eat affect your cancer and your recovery?

We hope this booklet will answer some of your questions. If not, at the end of the booklet you will find a list of useful organisations and books. There is also a list of websites and special groups to help and support you at this time. You can also call the freefone National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre to discuss any queries or concerns you might have. Remember your hospital dietitian can also give you support and advice.



National Cancer Helpline Freefone 1800 200 700



Healthy eating

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating is something we hear about a lot today. Not only can it help your body to grow and work well but also help prevent illness. But sometimes it is hard to know what exactly is a healthy diet.

A healthy diet involves eating a variety of foods that provide the nutrients your body needs in the right amounts. These include protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals. They are used by your body to give you energy, repair and build essential tissues, and help with lots of body functions.

If you have cancer, healthy eating is even more important during treatment. It can help you to:

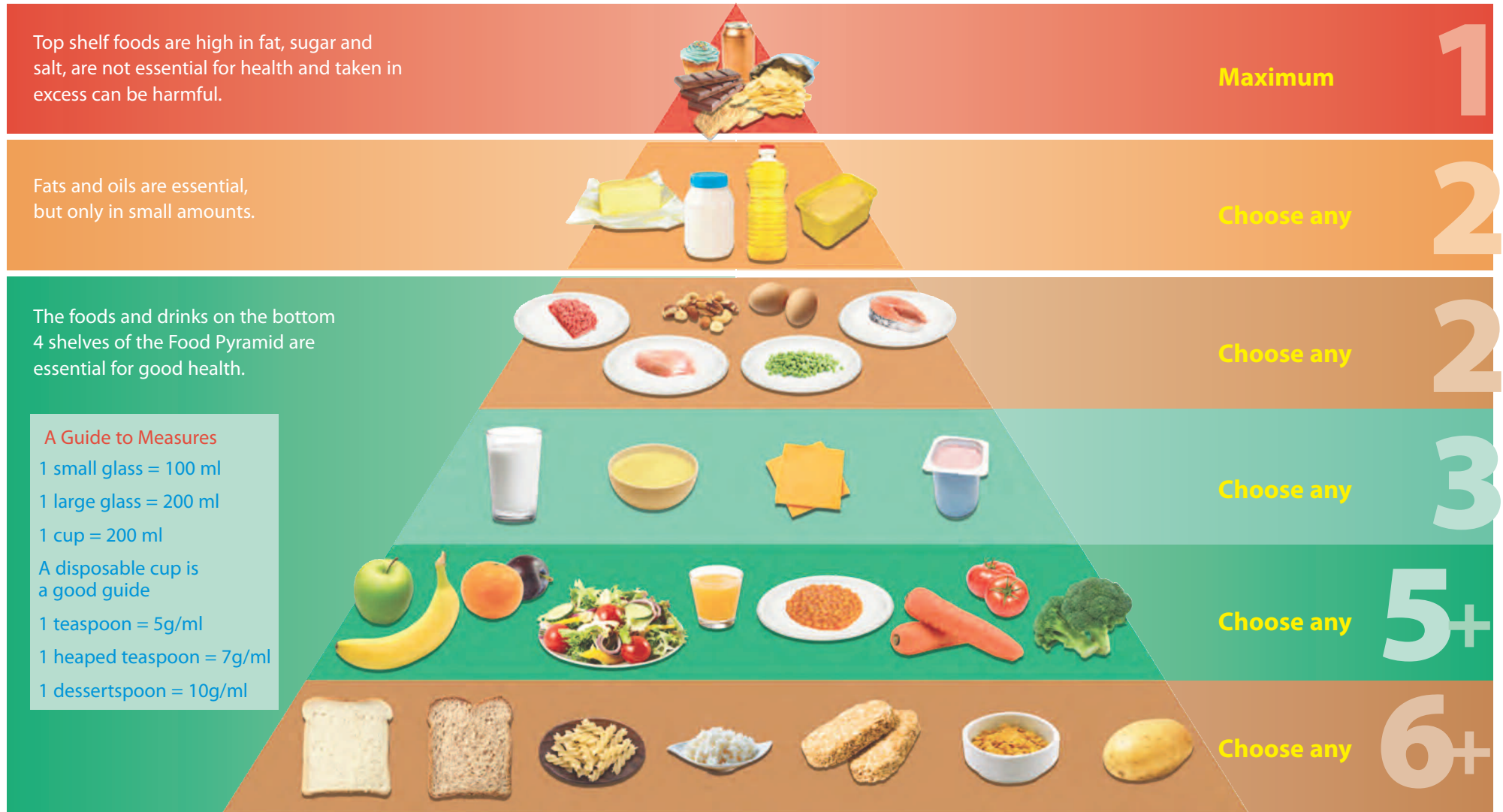
- Feel better
- Keep up your energy and strength
- Keep a healthy weight
- Tolerate the dose of drugs given
- Cope better with side-effects of treatment
- Reduce your risk of infection
- Heal and recover faster

A balanced diet

A balanced diet means taking in all the essential nutrients in the right amounts. That way your body can grow and work well. These nutrients fall into five groups. Some you need in large amounts and others in small amounts. For your diet to be well balanced, you must eat fruit and vegetables. In fact, you should include all the food groups in the food pyramid in the right amounts. See page 8 for more details about the food pyramid.

For some people with cancer, a balanced diet may not be suitable. For example, if you are losing weight. In this case, you may get different advice from your dietitian.

Understanding the Food Pyramid



Group	Food type	Amount to take every day
1	Fats and oils Sugars, confectionery, cakes, biscuits, high-fat snack foods Alcohol	Very little*
2	Meat, fish, eggs, beans, peas, nuts	2 servings*
3	Milk, cheese and yoghurt	3 servings*
4	Fruit and vegetables	5 servings*
5	Bread, cereals and potatoes	6 or more servings*

* This amount may change in special diets.

»»» If you have cancer and are losing weight, a balanced diet may not be suitable. Your dietitian may give you different advice instead.



Some healthy eating guidelines

- Limit foods and drinks from the top shelf of the food pyramid, as these are high in fat, sugar and salt.
- Prepare and cook your meals using fresh ingredients. Avoid ready meals and takeaways in general.
- Always read the nutrition label: check for high levels of fat, sugar and salt.
- Eat a variety of 5 or more of different coloured fruit and vegetables every day.
- Eat wholegrain breads, high fibre cereals, potatoes, wholewheat pasta and brown rice to satisfy hunger and fuel your body.
- Choose healthier cooking methods, like steaming, grilling, baking, roasting and stir-frying instead of frying foods.
- Eat more fish, especially oily fish such as mackerel, sardines and salmon, at least once a week.
- Choose lower-fat milks, low fat or no added sugar yoghurts and yoghurt drinks and reduced fat cheese.
- Choose vegetable oils high in monounsaturated fats such as rapeseed or olive oil.

- Drink about 8-10 cups or glasses of fluid every day. Water is best.
- Enjoy 3 meals a day sitting at a table, away from the TV, phone or computer screen. Eat slowly and chew your food properly.
- Make time for breakfast – you are more likely to be a healthy weight.
- Drink alcohol sensibly within recommended limits and preferably with meals.
- If you eat a healthy balanced diet, there is no need to take food supplements, unless advised by your doctor.

Adapted from *Your Guide to Healthy Eating Using the Food Pyramid*. Dept of Health/Health Service Executive, 2012.

What is a healthy weight?

A healthy weight is when your weight is right for your height, your body mass index (BMI) is normal and you are neither overweight nor underweight. The way to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight is to balance the food and drink you eat with physical activity. If you are unsure about your weight, ask your dietitian for advice. One way to check it is by finding your body mass index. BMI measures if your weight is right for your height.

BMI is graded so it can tell if you are underweight, a healthy weight, overweight or obese (fat). If your BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9, you are within a healthy weight range. If it is less than 18.5, you are underweight. If it is more than 25, you are overweight. If more than 30, you are obese.

Your dietitian can measure your BMI for you. Sometimes there are scales in shopping centres or pharmacies that will measure it for you. BMI is a guide only. If you are worried about your score, do talk to your dietitian. Most people are advised to keep their current body weight during cancer treatment. If you are losing or gaining weight, do discuss it with your nurse, doctor or dietitian.

Measuring BMI yourself

You can also calculate your BMI yourself. But first you will need to know your weight in kilograms (kg) and your height in metres (m). Divide your weight by your height and then divide the result again by your height. There are also many websites that can help you calculate it.

Waistline measurement

Measuring your waistline is a way of checking if you are at risk of cancer, especially bowel cancer. Extra weight around your middle can also lead to health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.

To measure your waistline:

- Find the top of your hipbone.
- At this point, measure around your waist. Make sure the tape measure is snug but not marking your skin.
- Take the measurement at the end of a normal breath.

Your risk of cancer is higher if your waistline is more than 94 cm or 37 inches for men and more than 80 cm or 32 inches for women. Talk to your dietitian if you are worried about your waistline.

How can I prevent cancer or its recurrence?

A simple guide to preventing cancer or its recurrence is:

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Be physically active.
- Be a healthy weight.

The World Cancer Research Fund believes that at least one-third of cancers can be prevented. This can be done by eating the right food, taking regular exercise and avoiding obesity. They suggest 10 ways to do this.



Preventing cancer or its recurrence



- 1 Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- 2 Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- 3 Avoid sugary drinks. Limit processed foods that are high in added sugar or low in fibre or high in fat.
- 4 Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables, wholegrains and pulses (beans, peas).
- 5 Limit the amount of red meat (beef, pork, lamb) you eat. Eat no more than 500g of cooked meat per week. Avoid processed meats (some sausages, black and white pudding, bacon, ham, cornbeef, salami).
- 6 Drink less alcohol. Limit it to 2 drinks for men and 1 drink for women a day. Have a few days free of alcohol each week.
- 7 Eat less salty foods, especially those processed with salt.
- 8 Avoid dietary supplements if you have a balanced diet. Some people may need supplements as advised by their doctor or dietitian.
- 9 Mothers should breastfeed fully for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods.
- 10 Cancer survivors should follow the guidelines for cancer prevention. Also, get advice about your diet from a professional dietitian.

Remember do not chew or smoke tobacco.



To sum up

- Healthy eating during cancer treatment can help you to feel better and recover faster.
- A balanced diet is when you take in all the essential nutrients in the right amounts so your body can grow, work and repair itself.
- For a diet to be well balanced, you must eat fruit and vegetables. You should include all the food groups in the food pyramid in the right amounts.
- A healthy weight is when you are neither overweight nor underweight.
- To help prevent cancer coming back, follow the guidelines for cancer prevention.



Nutrition and treatment

What eating problems can I expect from treatment?

Some cancer treatments can affect your appetite or how you eat. For example, how you chew, swallow and absorb food. Before any treatment, your doctor and nurse will explain any likely side-effects. Sometimes it can be hard to know what kind of eating problems to expect. It can depend on several things, for example:

- Location of your cancer and if it has spread
- Type of treatment given
- Area being treated
- Number of treatments
- Dose of treatment given
- Length of treatment
- Symptoms caused by the cancer
- Side-effects of treatment
- Your own general health

Referral to a dietitian

Cancer or the side-effects of treatment can reduce your appetite or cause weight loss. This can make you weak and tired, more prone to infections or less able to tolerate treatment. Ask to be referred to a dietitian if you are underweight or losing weight or have any concerns during your treatment.

>>> For support and advice on diet, talk to your dietitian.

Surgery

It is common to have some eating problems after surgery. Usually most people can start eating again a day or two after surgery.

If you have surgery to your digestive system, the eating problems may take longer to clear up. This includes surgery to your mouth, tongue, throat, gullet (oesophagus), stomach, small intestine, bowel, rectum, pancreas, liver, and gallbladder.

Some common eating problems include:

- Feeling full
- Swallowing problems
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Cramping
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Weight gain or loss

Because surgery may slow your digestion or affect your mouth, throat and stomach, you will need good nutrition. Good nutrition will help your wound to heal well and speed up your recovery. In some cases, you might need tube feeding after your surgery. See page 25 for more details about tube feeding.

Eating tips before surgery

- Your doctor, dietitian and nurse will decide if you need building up. This may be needed if you are malnourished through weight loss.
- Follow the advice of your nurse about clearing your bowels and fasting.

See page 27 for more details about specific eating problems.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy can affect normal cells as well as cancer cells. Normal cells that grow quickly are usually affected. These cells are found in your gut and bowel. So at times you may lose your desire for food or be less able to eat. Eating problems due to chemotherapy can include:

- Taste and smell changes
- Loss of appetite
- Sore mouth or throat
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Weight gain or loss

These problems can vary and depend on the drug, dosage and your own response to it. Usually these problems clear up once treatment ends or soon after.

Eating tips before chemotherapy

- Bring a light meal or snack with you. Some hospitals may offer food and drink to you.
- Eat something before treatment. Most people find a light meal or snack goes down well.

See page 27 for more details about specific eating problems.

Probiotic foods

Probiotic foods should be avoided if you are having chemotherapy. For example, 'live' or 'bio' yoghurts and drinks. These foods contain live bacteria and could make you sick, especially if your white cell count is low. Do ask your nurse and dietitian for more advice.

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy does not cause eating problems in general. But like chemotherapy, it can affect normal cells as well. Usually the affected cells are only those in the area of the body being treated. How severe the eating problems are depends on the area being treated and for how long.

Treatment of head and neck may cause:

- Dry mouth
- Sore mouth
- Sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Taste and smell changes
- Dental problems

Treatment of lung, oesophagus or breast may cause:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Difficulty swallowing
- Indigestion
- Increased phlegm (spit)

Treatment of stomach or pelvis may cause:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Cramping
- Bloating

Fatigue and appetite changes may also affect you during treatment. You may feel too tired to shop, prepare or eat food. After treatment, some of these problems may take longer to clear up. For your individual needs, do talk to your dietitian.

Eating tips before radiotherapy

- Eat something at least 1 hour before treatment.
- Bring foods or snacks to eat or drink on the way home.
- Eat small frequent meals with fluids if you are having eating problems.

See page 27 for more details about specific eating problems.

Biological therapy (immunotherapy)

Biological therapies use your immune system to fight cancer cells. Because your immune system is working harder, it can affect your desire or ability to eat.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Common eating problems are: | ▪ Nausea and vomiting |
| ▪ Loss of appetite | ▪ Diarrhoea |
| ▪ Dry mouth | ▪ Weight loss |
| ▪ Sore mouth | ▪ Too tired to eat due to fever and aching muscles |
| ▪ Taste and smell changes | |

Some of these eating problems go away after the first few doses of the drug or once treatment is over. If your blood count is low due to immunotherapy, see page 49 for more about low bacteria diets.

See page 27 for more details about specific eating problems.

Hormone therapy

Some types of hormone therapy can affect your appetite and change how your body deals with fluids. It can cause:

- Increased appetite
- Excess fluids in your body (fluid retention)

These problems usually go away once treatment is over. See page 27 for more details about specific eating problems.

Are there any foods that can affect treatment?

Some foods and drink might affect chemotherapy, hormone therapy or biological therapies. For example, alcohol, grapefruit or soy.

Alcohol: It is best to avoid alcohol, or at least reduce your intake, during chemotherapy or biological therapy. This is because some drugs may affect treatment or else dehydrate you. Do ask your doctor for advice. Alcohol may also irritate your mouth if you are receiving radiotherapy to your head, neck or chest region. Even small amounts found in mouthwashes can hurt if your mouth is inflamed.

Grapefruit: It is uncertain if grapefruit interferes with some hormone drugs used in the treatment of breast cancer. There is a link in theory that it can affect the absorption rate of these drugs. For example, tamoxifen, Femara® and Aromasin®. In the absence of clear evidence, you might prefer to avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice.

For most people, fruit juices are safe to drink and are a good source of vitamin C. Some fruit juices like grapefruit, however, can also affect certain antibiotics, cyclosporine used after transplants, and some drugs used to treat heart disease. Do ask your doctor for advice. It is best to take most medications with water, unless your doctor or nurse tells you otherwise.

Soy products: In general, soy is a good source of protein and low in saturated fat. But it may affect certain hormone drugs, like tamoxifen, used in the treatment of breast cancer. Soy contains isoflavones, which are compounds very like the hormone oestrogen. Research is ongoing to find out if soy can affect oestrogen levels in the body. Soy should not be taken if you have hormone-sensitive breast cancer and are taking tamoxifen. Soy may also interfere with aromatase inhibitors used in breast cancer treatment. Do talk to your doctor and nurse about it.

Herbal products may also affect chemotherapy. See page 56 for more details.



To sum up

- Eating problems can depend on many things like the type of cancer and treatment, and the number and dose of treatments.
- Common eating problems are loss of appetite, dry or sore mouth, taste and smell changes, difficulty swallowing, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea and constipation.

How can I build myself up?

During diagnosis, your nurse will talk to you about your eating habits. He or she can discuss any recent weight loss as well. This will include checking your weight and height. You can also talk about any eating problems you have or have had, or any situations where you find it hard to eat. If you live alone or need someone to prepare food, it can be arranged before you go home.

Building yourself up

If you are underweight, have lost weight unintentionally and have a poor appetite, you may need to build yourself up. Information is given here on how to increase the amount of energy and protein in your diet. If you have illnesses other than cancer, do talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian for specific advice.

To deal with poor appetite and weight loss, your doctor, nurse or dietitian may advise you to follow a diet high in protein and energy. This may be confusing as it might seem unhealthy, but you need to focus on building up your strength. This will help you to deal with the effects of cancer and treatment. You will also be less prone to infection.

>>> A diet high in protein and energy may sound unhealthy but you will need it to build up your strength.

Severe weight loss

Sometimes severe weight loss (cancer cachexia) can happen due to cancer itself or its treatment. This is where there is severe loss of appetite, weight loss, loss of strength and muscle mass. If this happens, there are ways to improve it. Your dietitian and nurse will discuss these with you. See page 36 for more details.

What foods contain energy and protein?

- **Carbohydrates** – a good source of energy
- **Fats** – high in energy
- **Proteins** – help your body to repair itself after illness or treatment and fight infection
- **Vitamins and minerals** – help your body to use the foods you eat

Carbohydrates	Fats	Proteins	Vitamins and minerals
Bread	Butter	Meat	Dried, tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables
Cereals	Margarine	Chicken	Smoothies made with fruit and yoghurt or fruit and ice cream
Potatoes	Oil	Fish	Meat
Rice	Full-fat milk	Eggs	Chicken
Pasta	Full-fat yoghurt	Milk	Fish
Scones	Full-fat cheese	Cheese	Eggs
Crackers	Cream	Yoghurt	Cheese
Cakes	Eggs	Nuts	Milk and yoghurt
Buns and biscuits	Fromage frais	Pulses (peas, beans, lentils)	
	Nuts	Many nourishing drinks	
	Salad dressing		
	Mayonnaise		

Talk to your doctor or dietitian before taking any vitamin or mineral supplement, as it may interfere with your treatment.




Increasing energy and protein

Here are some ways to increase your levels of energy and protein.

- 1 Eat more nutritious snacks and meals during the day. For example, eat six times a day.
- 2 For extra energy and protein, add the following to your food:
 - Butter or margarine
 - Milk
 - Cream
 - Cheese
 - Dressings, sauces and gravies
 - Honey, jam and sugar
 - Fry your food
- 3 Talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian about nutritional supplements. For example, build-up drinks.

Nutritious snacks high in calories and protein	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baked potatoes with beans, cheese, tuna, crème fraîche ▪ Breakfast cereal – hot or cold ▪ Beans ▪ Cheese ▪ Crackers ▪ Creamy soups or broth ▪ Custards ▪ Dips made with cheese or yoghurt ▪ Hot chocolate ▪ Ice cream ▪ Milk puddings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Milkshakes ▪ Mousse ▪ Muffins or scones ▪ Nuts ▪ Omelette ▪ Quiche ▪ Sandwiches ▪ Sausages ▪ Scrambled eggs ▪ Smoothies made with yoghurt ▪ Creamy soups or broth ▪ Yoghurt or fromage frais



Build-up drinks and products

There are other ways to help you if you are not getting enough calories and protein from your diet. You can get special drinks to give you nourishment. These are known as nutritional supplements. Most are high in protein and have extra vitamins and minerals. Some drinks can be added to food. Others are ready-to-drink and come in a variety of flavours. They may be based on juices, yoghurts or milk. These drinks should not replace your food but supplement your diet if you cannot eat well.

There are many types of drinks available, for example, Fortisip®, Ensure Plus®, Complan®, Build-Up® and Fresubin® Energy. There are also drinks for cancer patients like ProSure®, FortiCare® and Supportan® that have fish oils to improve severe weight loss (cachexia). If you have problems swallowing, there are also puddings and powders to thicken food or drinks. Your dietitian will tell you which ones are suitable for you. Some build-up drinks are not suitable if you have diabetes, kidney failure or other medical disorders. You can buy build-up drinks in pharmacies and some supermarkets, or your doctor may prescribe them for you.

Over time the protein and calories in these drinks can help you put on weight. Also, your energy levels may improve and make you feel better.

Ready-to-drink complete supplements

Milky type	Milky type with fibre	Juicy type	Yoghurt style
Fortisip Ensure Plus Fresubin Energy	Ensure Plus Fibre Fortisip Multifibre Fresubin Energy Fibre	Fresubin Jucy Fortijuce Ensure Plus Juce	Fortisip Yoghurt Style Ensure Plus Yoghurt Style


Liquid shot supplements	Milkshake style supplements
Procal Shot Calogen	Calshake Scandishake Enshake Complan Build Up Shakes


Swallowing difficulties	Wound healing	Supplements with fish oils
Ensure Plus Crème Fresubin Crème Forticreme Complete	Cubitan Ensure Plus HP	Prosure FortiCare Supportan


Most of the companies that make supplement drinks have helpful recipe suggestions on their websites. For example, you can add build-up drinks to a scone recipe or jelly.

Sample meal plans

Here are some sample meal plans that are high in protein and energy. They may give you ideas on how to plan your meals for the day. Remember to eat often if you have eating difficulties. Set aside a little time every 3 hours to eat something. For snack ideas, see the centre pages of this booklet.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Fresh pineapple Boiled egg on toast with butter – <i>add lots of full-fat butter to toast</i>	Cream of mushroom soup – <i>add a dollop of cream and herbs to the top</i> Bread roll with butter – <i>add full-fat butter to roll</i> Fromage frais – <i>choose full-fat variety</i>	Roast chicken Jacket potato – <i>add full-fat butter</i> Peas Fresh fruit salad – <i>add cream or ice cream</i>
		

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Fresh/tinned prunes Bacon and egg – <i>fry the egg</i> Bread – <i>fry the bread or add lots of full-fat butter</i>	Beans on toast – <i>add cheese to the beans and full-fat butter to toast</i> Banana – <i>add cream</i>	Lamb chop Roast potatoes – <i>coat the potatoes in oil before cooking</i> Carrots and parsnips – <i>mash with butter and cream</i> Apple pie and custard
		

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Fresh fruit juice Porridge – <i>made with full-fat milk, add some cream to porridge</i> Toast – <i>add extra full-fat butter to toast when hot</i>	Egg and cress sandwich – <i>mix egg filling with full-fat mayonnaise</i> Yoghurt – <i>choose thick and creamy or full-fat versions</i>	Mashed potatoes – <i>add grated cheese or full-fat butter</i> Grilled/baked fillet of cod – <i>add fresh herbs and olive oil</i> Green beans Sherry trifle – <i>add double cream</i>
		

What if I cannot eat?

Most cancer patients can get all their nutrients from their diet, or from their diet and nutritional supplements. But if this is not possible or too difficult, your doctor and dietitian can decide to give you nutrients another way. They can be given through a feeding tube or straight into a vein.

Tube feeding

The need for tube feeding will depend on your type of cancer or surgery and your general health. After major surgery to the digestive system, you may not be able to eat normally at first. You may receive nutrients through a tube passed into your nose, stomach or small bowel for a short while. Nutrients can also be given directly into your stomach using a PEG tube.

Tube feeding can also be done if there is serious weight loss, swallowing difficulties, or when not enough nutrients are taken.

Feeding into a vein

In some cases, feeding may need to be given directly into a vein. This is called total parenteral nutrition (TPN). TPN is used if your gut is not working properly or cannot be used for feeding. For example, if there is a blockage in your bowel or a large amount of bowel has been removed during surgery.

Your dietitian will talk to you about special feeding if it is needed.

Who can give me advice about my diet?

There are many experts on the medical team who can give you and your family advice about diet throughout your treatment and afterwards. Your surgeon can let you know what kind of problems to expect from surgery and when it is safe to start eating again. Other members of the medical team, like dietitians, can give you plenty of advice on the type of foods to eat or avoid.



Getting advice about my diet

Your doctors may be able to give you some advice on diet. Some of the people listed here can give you more specific help.

Dietitian	This is an expert on food and nutrition mainly based in hospitals. They are trained to give advice on diet during illness and use diet to help symptoms. They can also give you advice as an outpatient. Your dietitian may put you in touch with special services in the community too.
Speech and language therapist	This is an expert on eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. They are based in hospitals and in the community and are trained to assess swallowing problems. They can advise you on how to manage dry or sore mouth and on the safest drinks and foods for you to swallow.
Clinical nurse specialist/ oncology liaison nurse	These are specially trained nurses who work in a special cancer care unit. They can give you and your family advice and support about cancer from diagnosis and throughout treatment, but also about your diet and any eating problems. They can put you in touch with a dietitian too.
Helpline nurses	These nurses are cancer information nurses at the Irish Cancer Society who can give you advice on eating problems and suggestions on suitable menus. Call them on freefone 1800 200 700.
Daffodil Centres	Cancer information nurses are also found in Daffodil Centres in a number of Irish hospitals. They can also give advice on diet and cancer.
Medical social worker	This is an expert at giving emotional support to cancer patients. They can help with benefits and entitlements too. If you live alone, they can organise a home-help to shop and prepare your meals.
Support groups	Someone with a similar cancer and treatment as yours can give you practical advice about living with cancer. They may have useful tips about eating problems too.

Eating problems during treatment

Some of the common eating problems are listed here. Some advice on how to ease and cope with them is given. Do ask your dietitian, doctor and nurse for more advice, if you need it. Most of these problems go away once treatment has ended or soon afterwards. Others like dry mouth from radiotherapy may be permanent. Depending on the type of surgery you have, it may take some time for other eating problems to clear up.

See the centre of this booklet for useful foods high in protein and calories. If you are a diabetic, vegetarian or vegan, talk to your dietitian about how to get extra proteins and calories in your diet.



Hints & Tips – shopping and cooking

- When you are having treatment or recovering from it, get someone to help you with cooking and shopping or to take it over.
- Accept all offers of help, even if you prefer to do things yourself.
- Find out if your local shops can deliver your shopping if you order it over the phone.
- If you or someone you know has internet access, order your shopping online from a supermarket.
- Plan and prepare meals in advance.



Poor appetite

- Make the most of your appetite when it's good. Eat when and what you want.
- Take small meals and snacks about every 2–3 hours.
- Take snacks high in calories and protein.
- Keep snacks handy. Try cheese and crackers, sandwiches, muffins or scones.

- Use a smaller plate for your meals. Large portions can be offputting if your appetite is small.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Take plenty of drinks like milk, juices and soups.
- Try nutritional supplements, like Complian®, Ensure Plus® or Fortisip® or Fresubin® Energy, when it's hard for you to eat food. Special high-calorie drinks can help to keep your strength up. Talk to your dietitian about suitable ones for you. Your doctor can also give you a prescription for these drinks.
- Take only small sips while eating, as drinking might make you full.
- Encourage your family to eat together and make mealtimes relaxing and enjoyable.
- Take regular exercise, if you can, as it may help your appetite. Fresh air can help too.
- Talk to your doctor about medications to help other problems, like constipation, nausea, pain or other side-effects of treatment, if they affect your appetite.

Taste and smell changes

- Eat foods that appeal to your taste buds and smell good.
- Keep your mouth clean by rinsing and brushing – it may improve the taste of foods.
- Eat food cold or at room temperature, if smells bother you.
- Hold off eating foods that no longer appeal to you. Try them again some days or weeks later as you might enjoy them again.
- Flavour foods with onion, garlic or herbs like mint and basil, if you find food tasteless.
- Marinate meat, chicken or fish to help the flavour.
- Try small-sized tasty sandwiches.
- Rinse your mouth with tea, saltwater or baking soda to help clear your taste buds before eating.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- If liquids leave an unpleasant taste in your mouth, try drinking decaffeinated tea or coffee.

- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables rather than canned ones, if possible.
- Try chewing fresh or tinned pineapple before meals to get rid of bad tastes.
- Use plastic utensils if you have a metallic taste while eating.

Sore mouth, gums or throat

- Take sips of fluids like water often. Drink through a straw if your mouth is painful.
- Eat soft, moist food like omelettes, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, cream soups, natural yoghurt, milkshakes, stews, puddings.
- Moisten dry or solid foods with sauces or gravies.
- Purée or liquidise foods, for example, fruit and vegetables, in a blender to make them easier to swallow.
- Take cold foods and drinks like ice cream to soothe your mouth.
- Take care with the following as they can make a sore mouth or throat worse:
 - pickled, salty or spicy foods
 - rough food, like crispy bread, dry toast or raw vegetables
 - alcohol and tobacco
 - citrus juices, like orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit or pineapple
 - mouthwashes that contain alcohol or acidic ones.
- Take nutritious fluids like Complian®, Nesquik® or Build-Up®, and desserts like yoghurt, ice cream, custard. Eating foods high in protein and calories will quicken healing.
- Keep your mouth fresh and clean. Try sucking on mango or pineapple chunks, but avoid them if they sting.
- Rinse your mouth often with a salt and baking soda mouthwash. Add 1 teaspoon of baking soda and 1 teaspoon of salt to 1 pint of warm water.
- Use special mouthwashes and gels often. Ask your nurse and doctor about safe ones to use.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Put it into a container of warm water to soften the bristles.

- Ask your doctor and nurse for painkillers if your mouth is painful. They may prescribe some antiseptic or local anaesthetic gels or lozenges.
- Visit your dentist regularly. He or she can give you advice about caring for your mouth and special mouthwashes.

Dry mouth

- Take sips of fluids like water often. Sucking ice cubes or ice pops may help too.
- Drinking milk can help to protect your teeth. It is also a good source of protein and calories.
- Eat soft moist food. Moisten your food with sauces or gravy.
- Rinse your mouth regularly, especially before and after meals.
- Avoid the following as they can dry out your mouth:
 - salty and spicy foods
 - alcohol and caffeine
 - mouthwashes that contain alcohol or acidic ones.
- Take care with chocolate, pastry and freshly baked bread as they may stick to the roof of your mouth.
- Use special mouthwashes, gels and moisturisers often. For example, Biotène Oralbalance or BioXtra products. These contain saliva enzymes.
- If you have thick saliva, rinse your mouth often with a baking soda mouthwash. Add 1 teaspoon of baking soda to 1½ pints of water.
- If your mouth has a bad taste due to dryness, rinse it before meals or suck on pineapple chunks.
- Brush your teeth after every meal or snack. Use a soft toothbrush. Put it into a container of warm water to soften the bristles.
- Stimulate the flow of saliva with sugarless gum, boiled sweets or pastilles.
- Keep your lips moist with Vaseline or a lip balm.

Difficulty swallowing

- Eat your favourite foods but soften them with sauces and gravies, where possible.
- Try eating soft, liquid foods like soups, broths, milkshakes, custards, natural yoghurt. But vary them so you don't get bored. Make sure soups and broths have potato, meat or fish in them for extra nourishment.
- Thickened liquids can be easier to swallow. Your speech and language therapist can advise you on how to alter your foods.
- Chop up meat and vegetables finely for stews or casseroles.
- Blend or liquidise cooked foods.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Sit up as straight as possible for all your meals. Try to remain seated upright for 20–30 minutes after eating.
- Take drinks high in calories and protein like Fortisip, Ensure, ProSure, Complan, Build-Up. Your dietitian can advise you about these and your doctor may prescribe them.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of fluid each day.
- Ask your doctor to refer you to a speech and language therapist for special eating techniques.

Indigestion

- Try to eat small frequent meals instead of large ones.
- Sipping some drops of peppermint oil in hot water may help to relieve any discomfort.
- Herbal teas like mint or liquorice may help.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, alcohol, spicy foods, pickles and citrus fruits.
- Your doctor may prescribe an antacid like Gaviscon, Aludrox or Maalox to help.
- If indigestion is worse at night, avoid eating or drinking for 3 to 4 hours before bedtime.
- Sit up after eating.

Feeling full

- Eat smaller meals often.
- As you begin to feel less full, gradually increase the amounts of food and the time between meals.
- Avoid foods high in fibre to prevent you feeling full very quickly. For example, large portions of fruit and vegetables, wholegrain rice and pasta and wholemeal bread.
- Do not drink large amounts of liquids, especially fizzy drinks, just before mealtimes.

Nausea (feeling sick)

- If you have nausea during radiotherapy or chemotherapy, avoid eating for 1–2 hours before treatment.
- Drink clear liquids to prevent getting dehydrated.
- Take plenty of nourishing fluids if you miss a meal or two.
- Take fluids in between meals, as they may fill you up when eating.
- Eating little and often may help. Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Rest after your meals.
- Eat before you get hungry, as hunger can make nausea worse.
- If you are sensitive to the smell of hot food, try bland, cold foods.
- Try the following foods and drink as they might help:
 - fizzy drinks like mineral water, ginger ale, 7-Up or Sprite
 - cold foods like yoghurt, dessert, boiled potatoes, rice, noodles, breakfast cereal or cheese
 - dry food like toast, scones, crackers or breakfast cereals. This can help in the morning before you get up
 - bland foods like breakfast cereal, bread or toast, soup and crackers, yoghurt, milk puddings, scones or sandwiches
 - herbal teas like mint
- Avoid the following foods, as they may make nausea worse:
 - fatty, greasy or fried foods
 - very sugary foods
 - spicy foods
 - foods with a strong odour.

- Try foods containing ginger, such as ginger ale or tea, ginger nut biscuits, ginger cake or fresh ginger in hot water.
- If you have severe nausea, avoid your favourite foods. You may end up hating them after severe bouts of nausea.
- Ask a friend or family member to cook your meals if odours affect you.
- Ask your doctor and nurse about any anti-sickness medication you could take. Take them as advised.
- Relaxation exercises, acupuncture or meditation can sometimes help to prevent nausea.

Vomiting

- Do not eat anything until the vomiting has stopped and is under control.
- When the vomiting is under control, try small amounts of clear liquids like water.
- Carry on taking small amounts of liquid as often as you can keep them down.
- When you can keep down clear liquids, try a full liquid diet or a soft diet.
- Ask your doctor and nurse about any anti-sickness medication you could take. Take them as advised.
- If you get sick shortly after radiotherapy or chemotherapy, avoid eating for 1–2 hours before and after treatment.
- A rest after meals may help prevent vomiting.
- Relaxation exercises or acupuncture can sometimes help to prevent vomiting.

Cramping

- Eat and drink slowly. Small mouthfuls and chewing well can help.
- Avoid food and drink that can cause wind or cramps like beer, beans, cabbage, garlic, spicy foods and sugar-free gum and sweets made with sorbitol.
- Let fizzy drinks go flat before drinking them.

- Herbal teas like mint or liquorice may help.
- Gentle exercise like walking can ease cramps.

Bloating

- Avoid gassy foods like beans, brussels sprouts, onions, celery, carrots, raisins, bananas, prune juice, apricots and wheatgerm.
- Avoid gassy or fizzy drinks and beer.
- Eat and drink slowly and chew your food well.
- Don't skip meals.
- Eat 4 to 6 small meals spread out over the day. Avoid large meals.
- Add fibre to your diet slowly. For example, small amounts of vegetables, fresh and dried fruits, and wholegrains. Fibre may make bloating worse for some people.
- Try not to talk while eating.
- Avoid chewing gum and sucking on hard sweets.
- Do not smoke.
- Talk to your doctor and nurse to see if your medication or lactose intolerance is causing the bloating.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if any over-the-counter preparations can help.
- If you wear dentures, check with your dentist that they fit properly.
- Exercise regularly if you can. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.

Diarrhoea

- Drink plenty of fluids to replace what you lose with diarrhoea. Take liquids 30 minutes to 1 hour after your meal and/or between meals.
- Eat small amounts of food during the day instead of three large meals.
- Avoid high-fibre foods temporarily. These include bran, wholegrain cereals, nuts and seeds, beans and peas, dried fruits, raw fruits and vegetables.
- Your doctor may prescribe something to control the diarrhoea. Take this as advised.

- Take care with the following foods as they can make diarrhoea worse:
 - fatty, greasy and fried foods
 - gassy or fizzy drinks
 - drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea, coke and hot chocolate
 - citrus fruits, like orange and grapefruit, and tomato juices
 - very hot or very cold fluids
 - alcohol and tobacco
 - foods containing sorbitol, the artificial sweetener.
- Take live yoghurt or probiotic yoghurt drinks to replace any healthy bacteria lost from your bowel. Avoid these if your white blood cell count is low or if you have had a recent stem cell transplant. Check with your doctor and dietitian if you are unsure.
- Call your doctor if the diarrhoea continues or gets worse, or if the stools are red or dark in colour.

Constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids. For example, 2 litres of water every day.
- Eat regular meals and at the same time each day.
- Eat foods high in fibre. For example, wholegrain cereals (All-Bran, Bran Flakes or Weetabix), wholegrain breads, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, pulse vegetables (peas, beans and lentils), beetroot, fruit, prune juice and other fruit juices.
- Drink fig syrup or prune juice as they can help.
- Drink hot or cold drinks.
- Aim to have a bowel motion at the same time each day.
- Get some gentle exercise.
- Ask your doctor for a suitable laxative, especially if you are taking painkillers that cause constipation.

Fatigue (too tired to cook or eat)

- Prepare meals in advance when you have the energy. Freeze them for when you feel too tired to cook.
- Take nourishing drinks for the times you do not feel like eating.

- Buy ready-made meals like frozen meals, takeaways, tinned foods.
- Stock up on convenience foods.
- Ask family and friends to help you shop, prepare and cook food.
- Get enough rest. Nap during the day.
- Get some regular exercise, if possible, like walking.

Weight loss

- Make the most of your appetite when it is good.
- Take nourishing snacks high in calories and full of protein.
- Take snacks about every 2–3 hours. Do not skip meals.
- Add calories to food. See the centre pages of this booklet for suggestions.
- Avoid drinking liquids before meals.
- Take only small sips at mealtimes, as fluids may make you full.
- Do not put too much food on your plate. It can be offputting if your appetite is small.
- Try nutritional supplements when you find it hard to eat food.
- Keep snacks handy. Try cheese and crackers, sandwiches, muffins or scones.
- Take special high-calorie drinks to help keep your strength up. Your doctor can give you a prescription for these drinks.
- Encourage your family to eat together and make mealtimes relaxing and enjoyable.

Severe weight loss (cancer cachexia)

- Your dietitian will advise you on any special food and drinks to take.
- Eat more protein and calories in your diet.
- Eat smaller meals and often.
- Do not skip meals and remember to take snacks frequently.
- Add cream or butter to food to increase calories and protein.
- Take drinks like juices, milk or sweetened drinks.
- Add diced meat or cheese to sauces, vegetables, soups and casseroles.



PULL-OUT MENU SUGGESTIONS

NUTRITIOUS SNACKS

- ❖ Cereals – hot or cold
- ❖ Beans on toast
- ❖ Cheese and crackers
- ❖ Custards
- ❖ Hot chocolate (make with milk)
- ❖ Milk puddings
- ❖ Milkshakes
- ❖ Creamy soups
- ❖ Yoghurt or fromage frais
- ❖ Smoothies
- ❖ Mousses



- ❖ Sandwiches
- ❖ Nuts
- ❖ Omelettes
- ❖ Quiche
- ❖ Muffins or scones
- ❖ Sausages
- ❖ Scrambled eggs
- ❖ Baked potatoes with beans, cheese, tuna
- ❖ Dips made with cheese or yoghurt

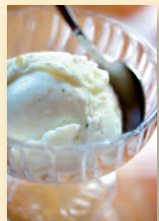


LIQUIDS



CLEAR LIQUIDS

- ❖ Water
- ❖ Fruit juices without fruit pieces
- ❖ Clear broth
- ❖ Consommé
- ❖ Ice pops
- ❖ Honey
- ❖ Clear fizzy drinks like flat 7-Up or Sprite
- ❖ Lucozade
- ❖ Sports drinks
- ❖ Strained vegetable broth



FULL LIQUIDS

- ❖ Milk
- ❖ Fruit juices
- ❖ Fruit nectars
- ❖ Fruit purée
- ❖ Fresh or frozen yoghurt
- ❖ Milkshakes
- ❖ Smooth ice cream
- ❖ Liquidised soup
- ❖ Tomato juice
- ❖ Vegetable juice
- ❖ Build-up drinks
- ❖ Soft custard
- ❖ Drinking chocolate



NUTRITIOUS MEALS

- ❖ Omelette or scrambled egg
- ❖ Baked egg custard
- ❖ Egg mayonnaise
- ❖ Creamed soups
- ❖ French toast
- ❖ Baked beans with grated cheese
- ❖ Tinned spaghetti with grated cheese
- ❖ Macaroni cheese
- ❖ Cauliflower with cheese
- ❖ Casseroles or stews
- ❖ Shepherd's pie or cottage pie
- ❖ Bolognese sauce
- ❖ Lasagne
- ❖ Savoury mince



- ❖ Pasta with creamy tomato sauce
- ❖ Soft poached or flaked fish in sauce
- ❖ Salmon mousse
- ❖ Fish and potato in a creamy sauce
- ❖ Mashed carrots with honey and cream
- ❖ Vegetables mashed with butter and melted cheese
- ❖ Chicken in cream sauce
- ❖ Quiche
- ❖ Jacket potato with butter, grated cheese or cream cheese
- ❖ Dips like hummus, pesto, guacamole, cream cheese



HOW TO INCREASE CALORIES



- Add butter or margarine to soups, mashed and baked potatoes, sauces, cooked vegetables, rice.
- Add whipped cream to desserts, puddings and fruit. Add it unsweetened to mashed potatoes and puréed vegetables.
- Add milk or cream to soups, sauces, puddings, custards, cereals. Use cream instead of milk in recipes.
- Add cheese to casseroles, potatoes, vegetables, omelettes, sandwiches. Melt where possible.
- Add chopped hard-boiled eggs to salads, vegetables, casseroles.
- Sauté or fry foods if you can tolerate them.
- Add sauces or gravies to your food.



HOW TO INCREASE PROTEIN

- Eat more hard and soft cheeses. Add them to food where possible.
- Use milk instead of water as a drink and in cooking whenever possible. Use full-fat milk.
- Take build-up drinks.
- Add ice cream or yoghurt to drinks, fruit and cereals.
- Add eggs to your food whenever possible. Avoid raw eggs.
- Add nuts, seeds and wheat germ to your food. Add to casseroles, salads, breads, biscuits.
- Add chopped meat or fish to vegetables, salads, casseroles, soups, baked potatoes.
- Eat more beans and peas. Add to soups and casseroles.

- Choose nourishing snacks like yoghurts, milk puddings, cereal with milk, or crackers and cheese. Or take snacks high in calories like nuts, sweets and dried fruits during the day.
- Take nutrition supplements like milkshakes and build-up drinks.
- Eat more fats. Add cream, butter or margarine to breads and vegetables. Add lots of gravies and sauces to your foods.
- If you cannot digest fat, talk to your dietitian about other sources of fat. They may advise you on suitable supplements to take.

Too much weight gain

Caused by medication

Some weight gain during treatment may be caused by medications like steroids. Once the steroids are stopped, you will have less of an appetite and lose any weight gained.

- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables. Juice your vegetables if you prefer.
- Eat wholegrain starchy foods like brown bread, pasta, potatoes (with skins), high-fibre breakfast cereals and brown rice, so you feel full. Try to choose the high-fibre varieties.
- Choose lean meat (beef or pork without the fat, skinless chicken).
- Take low-fat dairy products like low-fat milk or diet yoghurt.
- Avoid sweets, biscuits and cakes, and snacks between meals.
- Avoid fried foods. Grill or steam your food instead.
- Get more exercise, if possible.
- Talk to your dietitian if you are worried about the amount of weight gained.
- Don't diet without getting the advice of your doctor and dietitian first.

Caused by extra fluids

Some weight gain during hormone therapy or chemotherapy may be caused by extra fluid in your body. This holding on to extra water is known as fluid retention or oedema.

- Limit the amount of salt you take, if advised by your doctor or dietitian.
- Only take water pills (diuretics) prescribed by your doctor.

Other problems

There are a number of other problems that can happen due to cancer treatments, especially surgery. These include:

- Problems digesting nutrients, especially fat
- Rapid passage of food through your gut or dumping syndrome
- Losing too much fluid from your ileostomy
- Enteritis (inflammation of your small bowel)

If you have any eating problems that are not covered in this booklet, speak to your doctor, nurse or dietitian for individual advice. You can also call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre and speak to a specialist nurse. For problems relating to stomach cancer surgery, ask for a copy of the booklet *Understanding Cancer of the Stomach*. For bowel surgery problems, the booklet *Understanding Cancer of the Bowel* might be useful for you.



Hints & Tips – general guide to eating and drinking



- Eat a balanced and varied diet.
- Eat smaller meals and often.
- Eat food that you enjoy and can eat with family and friends.
- Check with your doctor and nurse if you can drink alcohol.
- Be careful about avoiding certain foods because you think they are harmful. For example, red meat. If you avoid dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and cheese, you will exclude the main sources of calcium in your diet. Avoid them only if advised by your dietitian.
- If you eat too many high-fibre foods, like fruit and vegetables, it can cause bloating and diarrhoea.
- There is no proof that organic foods are better than non-organic foods. In general, organic foods are more expensive.
- If you have specific eating problems related to another medical condition, discuss them with your dietitian.

Nutrition after treatment

Getting back to healthy eating

Once your treatment is over, ask your doctor if there is any food you should avoid in future. Your dietitian can help you plan some balanced diets.

It may take some time before you feel back to normal. Don't feel you should prepare home-cooked meals straightaway.



Preparing meals



- Make simple meals using easy-to-prepare recipes.
- Buy some prepared foods to make cooking easier.
- Stock up on your favourite foods so you can shop less often.
- Buy foods you are able to eat even when ill.
- Cook enough for two or three meals.
- Freeze foods in meal-sized portions.
- Think about ways you used to make mealtimes special and try them again.
- Don't be afraid to ask a friend or family member for help with cooking or shopping.
- Ask the medical social worker in your hospital to arrange a home help for you if you live alone.

Staying healthy and preventing cancer returning

- Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day. This is especially important if you have or had breast or colon cancer. If you are overweight, take more exercise and eat less fat. Check with your doctor or dietitian before you start any exercise programme.
- Avoid sugary drinks. Limit processed foods that are high in added sugar or low in fibre or high in fat.
- Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables, wholegrains and pulses (beans, peas).

- Limit the amount of red meat (beef, pork, lamb) you eat. Eat no more than 500g of cooked meat per week. Avoid processed meats (some sausages, black and white pudding, bacon, ham, cornbeef, salami).
- Drink less alcohol. Limit it to 2 drinks for men and 1 drink for women a day. Have a few days free of alcohol each week.
- Eat less salty foods, especially those processed with salt.
- Avoid dietary supplements if you have a balanced diet. But take them if advised by your doctor or dietitian.
- If you are breastfeeding, do it completely for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods.
- Follow the above guidelines for cancer prevention. Also, get advice about your diet from your dietitian.



Nutrition and advanced cancer

Support for eating problems

If you have advanced cancer, you will have different needs. The aim will be to treat your symptoms and make you comfortable rather than cure the cancer. This type of care is called palliative care. Many people with advanced cancer find that they lose weight and that their appetite becomes smaller. This can be due to side-effects of treatment, symptoms of cancer or due to the cancer itself. You may find for example that the amount of food you eat or the type of food that you like changes from day to day or from hour to hour for no reason. So it is important to eat the foods that you most enjoy and aim to have small meals when you feel able to eat. Do discuss changes in appetite and weight with your doctor, nurse or dietitian. A dietitian can help improve your comfort at mealtimes.



Hints & Tips – good nutrition for advanced cancer

- Choose food and drinks you enjoy and that you can tolerate.
- If you feel unable to manage large meals, aim to have a small meal or snack every 2–3 hours. Snack on foods like cereal, soup, milk, yoghurt, milky puddings, trifle, mousse, desserts, soft cake, cream crackers, scrambled eggs, ice cream, bread or toast, chocolate or biscuits.
- If you find large meals offputting, try having smaller meals on a small plate.
- If you cannot manage dinner or a main meal, aim to have a smaller meal or snack instead. For example, a small sandwich or dessert, or bread with butter or soup, or cheese on crackers or biscuits and tea.
- If you find eating is hard work, try soft food so you do not need to chew. For example, porridge, soup, stew or casserole, poached fish, ice cream, stewed fruits, bananas, custard or milk puddings, jelly, mousse, trifle or scrambled eggs.
- If you cannot eat food, try taking yoghurt drinks, milkshakes, smoothies or build-up drinks. Talk to your dietitian, doctor or nurse about these drinks.
- If you find preparing food makes you tired, try to use ready-made meals or tinned or frozen foods. Ask your nurse about Meals on Wheels. Accept help from family members and friends as well.



Pressure to eat

Sometimes family members and carers can put pressure on you to eat or they might watch what you do eat. You might find this upsetting. It might even put you off your food. Remember your family or carer only does this out of love and concern for you. Do tell them that you appreciate their efforts.

Do not worry that you are upsetting your family and friends if you do not eat. But it can help to talk to them about how you are feeling. For example, let them know if your appetite is poor and ask them to bring you the foods you enjoy but in small amounts.



Tips for carers

When your friend or loved one is ill, it is natural to want to feed them as well as possible. Sometimes this is not so easy. Difficulty in eating is a problem faced by many people with advanced cancer. Here are some things to consider at this time:

- Ask what foods they would prefer to eat.
- Don't force them into eating and drinking. Encourage without being pushy.
- Expect that their food tastes will change from day to day. They may go off their favourite food or else try something that was not tolerated the day before.
- Have a variety of snacks in the house so that if a meal is refused you can offer something else. Discuss what type of snacks they would prefer.
- Put small amounts of food on a small plate so the amount is not overwhelming.
- Offer small, frequent meals and snacks every 2 hours.
- Offer soft or liquid foods if they are having problems swallowing.
- Present food in an attractive way.
- If they cannot eat, encourage plenty of fluids.
- Avoid liquids with meals to prevent them feeling full, unless needed to help with dry mouth and swallowing.
- Ask the dietitian for advice on suitable foods, build-up drinks and products.

Talking about the importance of food can be upsetting for those who have advanced cancer. Try not to get upset if they do not eat your carefully prepared meals. Instead talk about what type of foods they would prefer and offer these in small amounts. Focus on their enjoyment of food rather than the amount of food they are eating. If they have lost a lot of weight, it can help to get clothes in a smaller size. Do check that their dentures still fit as well.



Other diets and supplements

Low bacteria diets

Most cancer patients do not have to worry about low bacteria diets. Usually, basic food hygiene is enough to prevent you getting any bugs. But some patients may have a low white cell count due to their cancer or treatment. As a result, you may be at risk of getting infections like food poisoning. It is best to avoid the following foods:

- Raw or lightly cooked eggs
- Coleslaw
- Unpasteurised cheeses like Brie, Camembert, Feta, Stilton, Blue, Roquefort
- Pâté
- Shellfish
- Homemade mayonnaise

Probiotics contain live bacteria so it is best to avoid these until your white cell count is normal. Probiotics are found in live or bio yoghurts and drinks. Your doctor, nurse and dietitian can give you more advice on precautions if your blood count is low.

Ways to prevent food poisoning

- Wash your hands before and after you handle any food.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and dairy products. For example, any cheese, milk, yoghurt that has not been pasteurised.
- Never eat any vegetable, fruit or bread that has signs of mould.
- Take special care when handling raw meats, fish, poultry and eggs.
- Avoid probiotic, live or bio dairy products.
- Cook meat and eggs fully. Avoid raw and undercooked meat, poultry, fish, shellfish or eggs.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables well. Avoid them if they cannot be washed well.
- Avoid tinned food if there are any bulges on the tin.
- Store raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separately.



- Thaw meat in the fridge and not on the kitchen counter.
- Do not eat food left out at room temperature for longer than 90 minutes.
- Check use-by dates on all foods and drinks. Do not eat foods or drinks that are out of date.
- Keep kitchen surfaces and utensils clean and wash chopping boards in warm soapy water after use.
- Clean your fridge and cupboards often. Get help from a family member or friend if you have no energy for cleaning.
- If you are feeling unwell, do not prepare foods for others.

Other diets

If you have cancer, you may feel that you should be following a special diet. But there is no one 'superfood' or special diet that has been proven to control cancer or reduce your risk of it coming back. Cutting out important parts of a normal diet is not advised. Too much of any one food is not helpful either and may even be harmful. While fruit and vegetables are good for you, large amounts can cause bowel problems. They can make you too full to eat other foods that are needed to provide energy and protein.

Be careful about following diets that claim to 'fight' cancer. Many of these diets are restrictive. This means that certain food items must be avoided and will cause unwanted weight loss.

>>> Avoid special diets because you are likely to lose weight.

After a cancer diagnosis, some people may decide to stop eating dairy products or take less calcium. While it may be good to eat a low-fat diet in general, it is not good to cut out all sources of fat and protein in your diet. Ask your dietitian for advice first. You can also call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 for more information. Ask for a copy of *Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies: A Guide for Cancer Patients*.

Should I change my diet?



Each person will have their own special nutrition needs. For that reason, it is best to talk to your doctor or dietitian about the foods you should be eating or avoiding. If your appetite is normal and you have not lost any weight, the best advice is to eat a balanced and varied diet. It is also not wise to experiment with diets during chemotherapy or radiotherapy. During chemotherapy, you may feel fatigued, lose your appetite and energy. You will need plenty of nutrition and calories to keep your strength up. Some cancer treatments may cause you to put on weight. It is best not to try to lose this extra weight until all your treatments are finished.

Low-sugar diet

There are many myths about cancer and one of them is that 'sugar feeds cancer'. Sugar in your diet does not directly increase your risk of cancer, or help it to grow. But sugar contains no nutrients needed by the body, apart from energy, and we can get all the energy we need from healthier sources. So it is best to limit the amount of sugar in your diet and eat a well-balanced diet as outlined in the food pyramid on page 8.

If you are taking steroids while on chemotherapy or have diabetes, your blood sugars will be checked often. Again, you should eat a well-balanced diet, as advised by your dietitian. If there are any changes to your blood sugars, your dietitian and nurse will advise you on your diet.

Taking supplements

Most people get all the nutrients they need from a balanced and varied diet. Unless you are having problems after treatment, supplements like iron or multivitamins are usually not needed.

Some people with cancer take large amounts of supplements to boost their immune system. Or they may take them in the hope of killing cancer cells. There is no proof that this will happen. Some of these substances can be harmful. In fact, large doses of some vitamins and minerals may make chemotherapy and radiotherapy work less well.

Let your doctor or nurse know if you are taking any dietary supplements, no matter how safe you think they are. Be careful what you read in the newspapers or on the internet. Adverts may say that something has been used for many years, but that does not prove it is safe or helpful. You do not need a prescription to buy dietary supplements, but be careful and use common sense. Keep in mind that just because a treatment is natural, it does not mean it is harmless.

Vitamin therapy

Vitamins are nutrients needed in small amounts for the normal growth and health of your body. Because the body does not make them, they must be taken in in food. Multivitamin supplements can be used safely as part of healthy eating, but may not be necessary. It is best to take them at the recommended daily allowance (RDA).

Some people believe that large doses of vitamins can prevent or cure cancer. But too much of any vitamin is not safe. This is true for those who are healthy too. High doses of vitamins can be toxic to the body. Vitamins are also known to have strong actions in the body. For example, high doses of vitamins may affect how chemotherapy and radiotherapy work.

Types of vitamins

Vitamins are divided into two groups. There are four fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) and nine water-soluble vitamins (eight B vitamins and vitamin C). The fat-soluble ones are stored in your body and can be toxic when too much is taken. In general, the water-soluble ones are not stored in your body and so cause fewer problems. Avoid all supplements if you are pregnant, unless advised by your doctor. Discuss with your dietitian the dosage of vitamins you should take.

Some vitamins may also affect chemotherapy drugs. For example, vitamin B₉ supplements. These may interfere with some cancer drugs, such as methotrexate. It may also affect your white cell count after chemotherapy. Too much vitamin C in particular can make radiotherapy or chemotherapy work less well.

Mineral therapy

Minerals are nutrients needed by your body in small amounts to help it work properly and stay strong. Examples include iron, calcium, potassium and sodium. Some Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese Medicine remedies may contain lead, mercury or arsenic at levels that could be harmful. These minerals might interact with medication you are taking as well. For that reason, tell your doctor about any herbal remedies you are taking. For those who have advanced breast cancer it may be best to avoid calcium supplements. Talk to your nurse or dietitian for more advice.

Taking soy products

Soybeans are native to Southeast Asia and can be taken in many forms. This includes milk, tofu or texturised protein. It is believed that soy products can help to protect against some types of cancer because of the isoflavones found in them. Remember these substances are not suitable on their own as a cancer treatment. But choosing foods containing soy can form part of a healthy diet because it is a good source of protein and low in saturated fat. Concentrated soy powders or large quantities of soy products are not recommended.

Do talk to your dietitian if you have any questions about soy and cancer. Soy should not be taken if you have hormone-sensitive breast cancer and are taking tamoxifen. Soy may also interfere with aromatase inhibitors used in breast cancer treatment. See page 19 for more about soy products.

Staying healthy

There are many ideas today for staying healthy coming from TV, the internet, magazines and by word of mouth. Naturally, things can get confusing, especially if you have a serious illness. Before you make any changes to your diet, do discuss it with your doctor, nurse or dietitian.



Complementary and alternative diets

Today many patients are interested in complementary and alternative therapies. A therapy is complementary when it is given **along with** conventional or standard medical treatments. Alternative is when the treatment is given **instead of** conventional treatments. These therapies include diet therapy, megavitamin therapy and herbalism. Most doctors and health professionals do not believe that alternative diets can cure or control cancer.

There are many types of cancer diets. Some believe they can improve your well-being and also cure you. But be careful because there is no evidence that they do.

Many of these diets focus on eating fruit and vegetables and avoiding red meat, sugar, caffeine, alcohol and dairy products. Most are low-calorie diets that cut out many important sources of protein and carbohydrates. And they may not be very tasty as well. You are likely to lose weight on these diets. Too many high-fibre foods, like fruit and vegetables, can also lead to bloating and diarrhoea. They can be expensive and harmful and they are not advised if you are receiving cancer treatment.

Complementary or alternative diets may leave out some of the following:

- Dairy foods
- Red meat, poultry and eggs
- Sugar

Complementary or alternative diets may include some of the following:

- High-fibre foods, fruit and vegetables
- Organic foods
- Vegetarian diets
- Soya

Examples of complementary and alternative diets

Dairy-free diet: Many research studies have looked for a link between diets that are high in dairy products and cancer, especially breast and prostate cancer. But these studies have not shown a clear link. Because of this, cancer experts do not recommend following a dairy-free diet to reduce the risk of cancer. Dairy products are an important source of protein, calcium and some vitamins.

Juicing: Juicing involves extracting juices from fresh fruit and uncooked vegetables. Juicing can add variety to the diet and can be a good way to consume vegetables and fruit, especially if chewing or swallowing is a problem. But juices may be less filling than whole vegetables and fruits and can often have less fibre. Adding fresh fruit and vegetable juice to a healthy, balanced diet can be useful but you should not replace meals with juices. There is no evidence to show that extracted juices are healthier than whole fruits and vegetables.

Ketogenic diet: The ketogenic diet is high in fat and low in carbohydrates, with moderate amounts of protein. The purpose of the diet is to produce higher levels of ketones in the blood, a state known as a ketosis. This means that the body has to break down body fat for energy. There is no evidence to show that this diet can help cancer patients.

Alkaline diet: The alkaline diet is based on the belief that certain foods can affect the pH of bodily fluids, and can therefore be used to prevent or treat illness. It is not recommended for cancer patients because of a lack of scientific evidence.

Before you try any diets, you should talk to your doctor, dietitian or nurse. For more information about diets, read *Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies: A Guide for Cancer Patients*. Call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 for a free copy, or visit a Daffodil Centre.

A note on genetically modified foods and organic foods

Genetically modified (GM) foods are made from organisms whose genetic material (DNA) has been changed in a way that does not occur naturally. For example, GM foods may have been changed to be more resistant to pests, slower to spoil or have better flavour. There is no evidence at this time that GM foods are harmful or that eating them can increase or decrease your cancer risk. Because GM foods have been available for a relatively short time, some people are concerned about their possible long-term effects.

Organic foods are produced using methods of organic farming. Some studies claim that organic fruit and vegetables have better flavour and stay

fresher for longer. But no research has been done to find out if an organic diet can prevent cancer or stop it coming back, compared to a non-organic diet. Some people worry that pesticides used in non-organic farming may cause cancer. In the EU, there are regulations on the use of pesticides and laws to ensure that agricultural pesticides are used within a safe level.

Detox therapies

Some people are a little uneasy about taking chemotherapy drugs. You may worry that toxins due to treatment will build up in your body. You may feel that your body needs to be 'detoxed' as a result. Be careful about deciding to have any therapies that claim to clean out your bowel. These include colonic irrigation and metabolic therapy using coffee enemas.

These treatments may be harmful if you have had surgery or have any bowel conditions. They can lead to dehydration, chemical imbalances, and infections. Ask your doctor, nurse or dietitian for advice before trying any detox therapy.

Herbs

Herbs found in nature have been used to treat illness for centuries. Many of them are safe to use but others can have strong effects. Just because something grows naturally does not mean it is safe. Remember herbal remedies are also drugs. They can affect your body in many ways – known and unknown. Do ask your doctor, dietitian or pharmacist for advice before taking any herb.

Some people take herbs to boost their immune system or cure cancer. But these can interact with medicines you are taking, including chemotherapy. They can sometimes cause severe allergic reactions. More research is needed to see if they have any positive effects.

Remember...

- Herbs that can help to prevent a disease may not have any benefits once you have the disease.

- Herbs may cure animals of cancer when tested in a laboratory. But when tested on humans they do not have the same effects.
- Some herbs may contain dangerous materials like lead and mercury or hormones like phytoestrogens.
- Some herbs may interact with your cancer or treatment in unknown ways.
- Taking some supplements may be good for you but finding accurate information about them may be hard.



If you decide to use complementary or alternative therapies...



Before you decide to change your diet and take supplements, be sure to talk to your doctor, dietitian or nurse. Some methods can be safely used along with standard medical treatment. But others can interfere with standard treatment or cause serious side-effects. For that reason, it is important to talk openly with your GP or cancer specialist if you are thinking of having treatment with either a complementary or alternative practitioner. Don't be afraid that your doctor will be offended by your wish for other treatments. In fact, he or she may be able to advise a safe and useful therapy for you.

Be cautious in selecting a practitioner. Don't be misled by promises of cures. At present in Ireland, this area is not fully regulated. Ensure that the practitioners you plan to visit are properly qualified and have a good reputation. Check to see if they belong to a professional body or not. If you are unsure but would like to know what other patients have found helpful, contact your doctor or a patient support group. Also, it is important to make sure that the practitioner is charging a fair price for your treatment.

More information is available in a free booklet from the Irish Cancer Society called *Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies: A Guide for Cancer Patients*. If you would like a copy or more advice, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre if one is located at your hospital.



Support resources

Irish Cancer Society services

The Irish Cancer Society funds a range of cancer support services that provide care and support for people with cancer at home and in hospital.

- Cancer Information Service (CIS)
- Daffodil Centres
- Cancer support services
- Survivors Supporting Survivors
- Counselling
- Night nursing
- Oncology liaison nurses
- Cancer information booklets
- Financial support
- Care to Drive transport project

Cancer Information Service (CIS)

The Society provides a Cancer Information Service with a wide range of services. The **National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700** is a freephone service that gives confidential information, support and guidance to people concerned about cancer. It is staffed by specialist cancer nurses who have access to the most up-to-date facts on cancer-related issues. These include prevention of cancer, risk factors, screening, dealing with a cancer diagnosis, different treatments, counselling and other support services. The helpline can also put you in contact with the various support groups that are available. The helpline is open Monday to Thursday from 9am to 7pm, and every Friday from 9am to 5pm.

- The website **www.cancer.ie** provides information on all aspects of cancer.
- All queries or concerns about cancer can be emailed to the CIS at **helpline@irishcancer.ie**
- **Message Board** is a discussion space on our website (www.cancer.ie) to share your stories, ideas and advice with others.
- The **CancerChat** service is a live chatroom with a link to a Cancer Information Service nurse.
- The **walk-in caller service** allows anyone with concerns about cancer to freely visit the Society to discuss them in private.
- Find us on **Facebook** and follow us on **Twitter** (@IrishCancerSoc).

Daffodil Centres

Daffodil Centres are located in a number of Irish hospitals. These have been set up by the Irish Cancer Society in partnership with each hospital and are an extension of the Cancer Information Service. They are generally found near the main entrance of the hospital and are open during the day. Staffed by a specialist nurse and trained volunteers, they provide a range of information, advice, help and support on all aspects of cancer, free of charge.

Daffodil Centres give you a chance to talk in confidence and be listened to and heard. If you are concerned about cancer, diagnosed with cancer or caring for someone with cancer, you are welcome to visit the centre. Do check to see if there is a Daffodil Centre in your hospital.

Cancer support services

The Irish Cancer Society funds a range of services set up to support you and your family at time of diagnosis, throughout treatment and afterwards. See page 64 for more details.

Survivors Supporting Survivors

Being diagnosed with cancer can be one of the hardest situations to face in your lifetime. Survivors Supporting Survivors is a one-to-one support programme run by the Irish Cancer Society. It provides peer support to people who have been diagnosed with cancer. All of the volunteers have had a cancer diagnosis and have been carefully selected and trained to give you support, practical information and reassurance when you need it most. You can speak to someone who really knows what you are going through. If you would like to make contact with a volunteer, please call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700.

Counselling

Coping with a diagnosis of cancer can be very stressful at times. Sometimes it can be hard for you and your family to come to terms with your illness. You might also find it difficult to talk to a close friend or relative. In this case, counselling can give you emotional

support in a safe and confidential environment. Call the helpline 1800 200 700 to find out about counselling services provided by the Irish Cancer Society and services available in your area.

Night nursing

The Society can provide a night nurse, free of charge, for up to 10 nights if you need end-of life care at home. The night nurse can also give practical support and reassurance to your family. You can find out more about this service from your GP, local public health nurse, a member of the homecare team or the palliative care services at the hospital. Homecare nurses can offer advice on pain control and managing other symptoms.

Oncology liaison nurses

The Society funds some oncology liaison nurses who can give you and your family information as well as emotional and practical support. Oncology liaison nurses work as part of the hospital team in specialist cancer centres.

Cancer information booklets and factsheets

Our booklets provide information on all aspects of cancer and its treatment, while our factsheets deal with very specific topics. The booklets also offer practical advice on learning how to cope with your illness. The booklets and factsheets are available free of charge from the Irish Cancer Society by calling 1800 200 700. They can also be downloaded from www.cancer.ie or picked up at a Daffodil Centre.



Financial support

A diagnosis of cancer can bring with it the added burden of financial worries. In certain circumstances the Irish Cancer Society may be able to provide limited financial help to patients in need through schemes such as Travel2Care and Financial Aid.

Travel2Care: Travel2Care can help with your travel costs if you have genuine financial hardship due to travelling over 50 kilometres to a rapid access diagnostic clinic for tests or to a designated cancer centre or approved satellite centre for cancer treatment. The scheme is funded by the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) and managed by the Irish Cancer Society. Travel2Care can help with some of the costs of public transport, such as trains or buses, private transport costs, or petrol expenses.

If this applies to you, contact the medical social work department in your hospital or speak to your cancer care nurse. You can also contact the Irish Cancer Society on (01) 231 6643 / 231 6619 or email: travel2care@irishcancer.ie

Financial Aid: A special fund has been created to help families experiencing financial difficulty as a result of cancer. If this applies to you, contact the medical social work department in your hospital. You can also speak to your cancer care nurse or contact the Irish Cancer Society at (01) 231 6619.

Care to Drive transport project

Care to Drive is a scheme operated by the Irish Cancer Society. It provides free transport for patients to and from their treatments using volunteer drivers. All of the volunteers are carefully selected, vetted and trained. You are collected from your home, driven to your appointment and brought back home again. Call (01) 231 0522 to find out if Care to Drive is available in your hospital.

If you would like more information on any of the above services, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700.



Useful organisations

Irish Cancer Society

43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 231 0500
National Cancer Helpline: 1800 200 700
Email: helpline@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.cancer.ie

The Carers Association

Market Square
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Freefone: 1800 240 724
Email: info@carersireland.com

Citizens Information

Tel: 0761 07 4000
Email: information@citizensinformation.ie
Website: www.citizensinformation.ie

Get Ireland Active: Promoting Physical Activity in Ireland

Website: www.getirelandactive.ie

HARI: The National Fertility Centre

Rotunda Hospital
Parnell Square
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 807 2732
Email: info@hari.ie
Website: www.hari.ie

Health Promotion HSE

Website: www.healthpromotion.ie

All Ireland Co-operative Oncology Research Group

Website: www.icorg.ie

Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute

Ashgrove House
Kill Avenue
Dún Laoghaire
Co Dublin
Tel: 01 280 4839
Email: info@indi.ie
Website: www.indi.ie

Irish Oncology and Haematology Social Workers Group

Website:
<http://socialworkandcancer.com>

Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

Commercial House
Westend Commercial Village
Blanchardstown
Dublin 15
Tel: 01 812 9350
Helpline 0761 07 2000
Email: helpline@mabs.ie
Website: www.mabs.ie

Health insurers

AVIVA Health

PO Box 764
Togher
Cork
Tel: 1850 717 717
Email: info@avivahealth.ie
Website: www.avivahealth.ie

GloHealth

PO Box 12218
Dublin 18
Tel: 1890 781 781
Email: findoutmore@glohealth.ie
Website: www.glohealth.ie

Laya Healthcare

Eastgate Road
Eastgate Business Park
Little Island
Co Cork
Tel: 021 202 2000
LoCall: 1890 700 890
Email: info@layahealthcare.ie
Website: www.layahealthcare.ie

Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI)

IDA Business Park
Purcellsinch
Dublin Road
Kilkenny
CallSave: 1850 44 44 44
Email: info@vhi.ie
Website: www.vhi.ie

National support services**Survivors Supporting Survivors**

Irish Cancer Society
43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
National Cancer Helpline: 1800 200 700
Email: support@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.cancer.ie

ARC Cancer Support Centres Dublin

[See page 65]

Canteen Ireland

[Teenage cancer support]
Carmichael Centre
North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 872 2012
Email: info@canteen.ie
Website: www.canteen.ie

Cancer Support Sanctuary LARCC

[See page 66]

Connaught support services**Athenry Cancer Care**

Social Service Centre
New Line
Athenry
Co Galway
Tel: 091 844 319 / 087 412 8080
Email: athenrycancer@athenrycancer.ie
Website: www.athenrycancer.ie

Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre

Main Street
Ballinasloe
Co Galway
Tel: 090 964 5574
Email: ballinasloecancer@yahoo.co.uk

Cara Iorrais Cancer Support Centre

2 Church Street
Belmullet
Co Mayo
Tel: 097 20590 / 087 391 8573
Email: caraiorrais@gmail.com

East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support

Cluain Mhuire
Brackernagh
Ballinasloe
Co Galway
Tel: 090 964 2088 / 087 984 0304
Email: info@egmcancersupport.com
Website: www.eastgalwaycancersupport.com

Gort Cancer Support Group

Garrabeg
Gort
Co Galway
Tel: 091 648 606 / 086 172 4500
Email: info@gortcancersupport.ie
Website: www.gortcancersupport.ie

Hand in Hand

[Childhood cancer in west and northwest]
Oranmore Business Park
Oranmore
Co Galway
Tel: 091 799 759
Email: info@handinhand.ie
Website: www.handinhand.ie

Mayo Cancer Support Association

Rock Rose House
32 St Patrick's Avenue
Castlebar
Co Mayo
Tel: 094 903 8407
Email: info@mayocancer.ie
Website: www.mayocancer.ie

Roscommon Cancer Support Group

Vita House Family Centre
Abbey Street
Roscommon
Tel: 090 662 5898
Email: info@vitahouse.org

Sligo Cancer Support Centre

44 Wine Street
Sligo
Tel: 071 917 0399
Email: scsc@eircom.net
Website: www.slilocancersupportcentre.ie

Tuam Cancer Care Centre

Cricket Court
Dunmore Road
Tuam
Co Galway
Tel: 093 28522
Email: support@tuamcancercare.ie
Website: www.tuamcancercare.ie

Leinster support services**Aoibheann's Pink Tie**

[Supporting children with cancer]
Unit 22
Docklands Innovation Centre
128-130 East Wall Road
Dublin 3
Tel: 01 240 1300
Email: lindaconnell@aoibheannspinktie.ie
Website: www.aoibheannspinktie.ie

ARC Cancer Support Centre

ARC House
65 Eccles Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 830 7333
Email: info@arccancersupport.ie
Website: www.arccancersupport.ie

ARC Cancer Support Centre

ARC House
559 South Circular Road
Dublin 8
Tel: 01 707 8880
Email: info@arccancersupport.ie
Website: www.arccancersupport.ie

Arklow Cancer Support Group

25 Kings Hill
Arklow
Co Wicklow
Tel: 0402 23590 / 085 110 0066
Email: info@arklowcancersupport.com
Website: www.arklowcancersupport.com

Balbriggan Cancer Support Group

Unit 23, Balbriggan Business Park
Harry Reynold's Road
Balbriggan
Co Dublin
Tel: 087 353 2872 / 086 164 2234

The Bella Rose Foundation

Merry Maid House
West Park Campus
Garter's Lane
Citywest
Dublin 24
Tel: 087 320 3201
Email: thebellarosefoundation@gmail.com
Website: www.bellarose.ie

Bray Cancer Support & Information Centre

Aubrey Court
Parnell Road
Bray
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 286 6966
Email: info@braycancersupport.ie
Website: www.braycancersupport.ie

Cara Cancer Support Centre

7 Williamson's Place
Dundalk
Co Louth
Tel: 042 937 4905
Mobile: 087 395 5335
Email: info@ccscdundalk.ie
Website: ccscdundalk.ie

Cois Nore Cancer Support Centre

8 Walkin Street
Kilkenny
Tel: 056 775 2222
Email: coisnorekilkenny@gmail.com
Website: www.kilkennycancersupport.ie

Cuisle Cancer Support Centre

Block Road
Portlaoise
Co Laois
Tel: 057 868 1492
Email: cuislecentre@eircom.net
Website: www.cuislecentre.com

Dóchas: Offaly Cancer Support Group

Teach Dóchas
Offaly Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 057 932 8268
Email: info@dochasoffaly.ie
Website: www.dochasoffaly.ie

Éist Carlow Cancer Support Centre

The Waterfront
Mill Lane
Carlow
Tel: 059 913 9684
Mobile: 085 144 0510
Email: info@eistcarlowcancersupport.ie
Website: www.eistcarlowcancersupport.ie

Gary Kelly Cancer Support Centre

George's Street
Drogheda
Co Louth
Tel: 041 980 5100
Email: info@gkcancersupport.com
Website: www.gkcancersupport.com

Greystones Cancer Support

La Touche Place
Greystones
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 287 1601
Email: info@greystonescancersupport.com
Website: www.greystonescancersupport.com

Hope Cancer Support Centre

22 Weafer Street
Enniscorthy
Co Wexford
Tel: 053 923 8555
Email: info@hopesupportcentre.ie
Website: www.hopesupportcentre.ie

Cancer Support Sanctuary LARCC

Cooles Road
Multyfarnham
Mullingar
Co Westmeath
Tel: 044 937 1971
CallSave: 1850 719 719
Email: info@cancersupport.ie
Website: www.cancersupport.ie

Rathdrum Cancer Support Centre

St Anne's
Lower Street
Rathdrum
Co Wicklow
Tel: 087 292 8660
Email: rathcan@gmail.com

Tallaght Cancer Support Group

Trustus House
1-2 Main Street
Tallaght
Dublin 24
Tel: 086 400 2736
Email: ctallaght@yahoo.ie
Website: tallaghtcancersupport.com

Wicklow Cancer Support Centre

Rear of Butler's Medical Hall
Abbey Street
Wicklow
Tel: 0404 32696
Email: wicklowcancersupport@gmail.com

Munster support services**Cancer Information & Support Centre**

University Hospital Limerick
Dooradoyle
Co Limerick
Tel: 061 485 163
Website: www.midwesterncancercentre.ie

CARE Cancer Support Centre

14 Wellington Street
Clonmel
Co Tipperary
Tel: 052 618 2667
Email: caresupport@eircom.net
Website: www.cancercare.ie

Cork ARC Cancer Support House

Cliffdale
5 O'Donovan Rossa Road
Cork
Tel: 021 427 6688
Email: info@corkcancersupport.ie
Website: www.corkcancersupport.ie

Kerry Cancer Support Group

124 Tralee Townhouse Apartments
Maine Street
Tralee
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 719 5560 / 087 230 8734
Email: kerrycancersupportgroup@eircom.net
Website: www.kerrycancersupport.com

Recovery Haven

5 Haig's Terrace
Tralee
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 719 2122
Email: recoveryhaven@gmail.com
Website: www.recoveryhavenkerry.com

Sláinte an Chláir: Clare Cancer Support

Tír Mhuire
Kilnamona
Ennis
Co Clare
Tel: 1850 211 630
Email: admin@clarecancersupport.com
Website: www.clarecancersupport.com

South Eastern Cancer Foundation

Solas Centre
Williamstown
Waterford
Tel: 051 304 604
Email: info@solascentre.ie
Website: www.solascentre.ie

Suaimhneas Cancer Support Centre

2 Clonaslee
Gortland Roe
Nenagh
Co Tipperary
Tel: 067 37403
Email: suaimhneascancersupport@eircom.net

Suir Haven Cancer Support Centre

Clongour Road
Thurles
Co Tipperary
Tel: 0504 21197
Email: suirhaven@gmail.com

Youghal Cancer Support Group

161 North Main Street
Youghal
Co Cork
Tel: 024 92353
Email: youghalcancersupportgroup@hotmail.com

Ulster support services**Coiste Scaoil Saor ó Ailse**

C/O Ionad Níomh Padraig
Upper Dore
Bunbeg
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 953 2949
Email: ionadnp@eircom.net
Website: www.scaoilsaor.ie

Crocus: Monaghan Cancer Support Centre

The Wellness Centre
19 The Grange
Plantation Walk
Monaghan
Tel: 087 368 0965 / 047 62565
Email: crocus.2011@yahoo.com

Cuan Cancer Social Support and Wellness Group

2nd Floor, Cootehill Credit Union
22-24 Market Street
Cootehill
Co Cavan
Tel: 086 455 6632

The Forge Cancer Support Service

The Forge Family Resource Centre
Pettigo
Co Donegal
Tel: 071 986 1924
Email: theforgefrc@eircom.net

Living Beyond Cancer

Oncology Day Services
Letterkenny General Hospital
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 912 5888 (Bleep 674/734) / 074 910 4477
Email: noreen.rodgers@hse.ie

Other support services**Cancer Care West**

72 Seamus Quirke Road
Galway
Tel: 091 545 000
Email: info@cancercarewest.ie
Website: www.cancercarewest.ie

Cúnamh: Bons Secours Cancer Support Group

Bon Secours Hospital
College Road
Cork
Tel: 021 480 1676
Website: www.cunamh.ie

Dundalk Cancer Support Group

Philipstown
Hackballscross
Dundalk
Co Louth
Tel: 086 107 4257

Killybegs Cancer Support Group

Kille
Kilcar
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 973 1292
Email: riverbankdunne@eircom.net

Newbridge Cancer Support Group

Tel: 083 360 9898
Email:
newbridgecancerhealinghelp@gmail.com

Solace: Donegal Cancer Support Centre

St Joseph's Avenue
Donegal Town
Tel: 074 974 0837
Email: solacedonegal@eircom.net

Useful contacts outside Republic of Ireland**Action Cancer**

Action Cancer House
1 Marlborough Park
Belfast BT9 6XS
Tel: 028 9080 3344
Email: info@actioncancer.org
Website: www.actioncancer.org

American Cancer Society

Website: www.cancer.org

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland

40-44 Eglantine Avenue
Belfast BT9 6DX
Tel: 048 9066 3281
Email: hello@cancerfocusni.org
Website: www.cancerfocusni.org

Cancer Network Buddies

Website: www.cancerbuddiesnetwork.org

Cancer Research UK

Tel: 0044 20 7242 0200
Website: www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Healthtalkonline

Website: www.healthtalkonline.org

Macmillan Cancer Support (UK)

Tel: 0044 20 7840 7840
Email: cancerline@macmillan.org.uk
Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Support & Information Centre

Belfast City Hospital Trust
77-81 Lisburn Road
Belfast BT9 7AB
Tel: 028 9069 9202
Email: cancerinfo@belfasttrust.hscni.net
Website: www.cancerni.net

National Cancer Institute (US)

Website: www.nci.nih.gov

Helpful books**Free booklets and DVDs from the Irish Cancer Society:**

- **Understanding Chemotherapy**
- **A Guide to Chemotherapy (DVD)**
- **Understanding Radiotherapy**
- **Radiation Therapy: A Patient Pathway (DVD)**
- **Coping with Fatigue**
- **Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies**
- **Journey Journal: Keeping Track of Your Cancer Treatment**
- **Managing the Financial Impact of Cancer: A Guide for Patients and Their Families**
- **Understanding the Emotional Effects of Cancer**
- **Lost for Words: How to Talk to Someone with Cancer**
- **Who Can Ever Understand? Talking about Your Cancer**
- **Talking to Children about Cancer: A Guide for Parents**

**American Cancer Society Complete Guide to Nutrition for Cancer Survivors**

(2nd edn)
B Grant, AS Bloch, KK Hamilton, CA Thomson (eds)
American Cancer Society, 2010
ISBN 9780944235782

The Daily Telegraph Encyclopaedia of Vitamins, Minerals & Herbal Supplements

Dr Sarah Brewer
Robinson, 2002
ISBN 1841191841

Good Nutrition for People with Cancer

Haematology Oncology Interest Group of the Irish Nutrition & Dietetics Institute, 2010
[Ask your dietitian for a copy.]

Healthy Eating for Life to Prevent and Treat Cancer

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Wiley, 2002
ISBN 9780471435976

Nutrition of the Cancer Patient

American Institute for Cancer Research, 2010
[Download from www.aicr.org]

Nutrition and the Cancer Survivor

American Institute for Cancer Research, 2010
[Download from www.aicr.org]

The Power of Food – Cancer: Food Facts & Recipes

Clare Shaw
Hamlyn, 2005
ISBN 9780600611103

Turning It Around: Cancer and Nutrition (DVD)

Rarer Cancers Foundation, 2007
[Contact www.rarercancers.org.uk for details]

101+ Square Meals

[Budget and nutrition]
Norah Bourke et al
MABS/HSE West/Paul Partnership/Limerick VEC/Safefood, 1998
ISBN 187407514X
[For more details, see www.mabs.ie]

What does that word mean?

Alternative therapy	A way of promoting health and well-being that has a different philosophy and viewpoint from conventional medicine. In this case, the therapies are used instead of conventional medicine. For example herbalism, metabolic therapy, megavitamin therapy.
Anorexia	Loss of appetite, lack of desire or interest in food.
Antioxidants	Chemicals that protect your body from other chemicals called free radicals that cause cell damage. Antioxidants are vitamins, enzymes and minerals. They are found in berries, broccoli, tomatoes, red grapes, garlic, spinach, tea and carrots. Some well-known antioxidants are vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin E. See also free radicals.
Biological therapy	A treatment to help your immune system fight disease and infection. It uses proteins from your body to destroy cancer cells.
Calorie	This measures the energy your body gets from food. You need calories so your body has the energy to work, grow and repair itself.
Cachexia	When there is severe loss of appetite, weight loss, loss of strength and muscle mass due to cancer and/or its treatment.
Complementary therapy	Therapies that can be given with conventional medicine. For example, massage, acupuncture.
Chemotherapy	A treatment that uses drugs to cure or control cancer.

Dehydration	When your body loses too much water and affects how it works.
Digestive tract	The parts of your body involved with eating, digesting, and getting rid of food. This includes the mouth, gullet (oesophagus), stomach and intestines.
Diet	The foods you eat and drink. This includes liquids and solids.
Dietitian	An expert on food and nutrition. They can give advice on the most suitable type of diet to follow when you have cancer.
Fibre	The part of plant foods that your body cannot digest. It helps to move waste out of your bowels quickly.
Fluids	Things to drink, like water. Also called liquids.
Free radicals	Chemicals that are highly reactive and often contain oxygen or nitrogen. They are formed naturally in your body during chemical reactions. Because they can cause cell damage, they are linked to cancer.
Herbalism	A form of alternative medicine that uses plants and simple extracts of plants to heal the whole body.
Hormone therapy	A treatment that changes the amount of hormones in your body to cure or prevent cancer coming back.
Malnourished	When you do not take in enough energy, protein and other nutrients, you will lose weight and your body may not work as well as it should. This can happen if you do not eat a balanced diet. Undereating or overeating can lead to a lack of a balanced diet.

Minerals	Nutrients needed by your body to help it work well. These include iron, calcium, potassium and sodium.
Natural products	Products that occur in nature. This does not mean that they are safe but that they are naturally occurring medicines.
Nutrients	Chemicals that make up foods. These include protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals. They are used by your body to work properly and grow. Essential nutrients are those that your body does not make itself and must get from food eaten.
Nutrition	The taking in and use of food by your body. After food is eaten, the body breaks it down into nutrients, which then travel through the bloodstream to cells in your body to help it grow and work.
Obesity	Having a high amount of body fat. A person is said to be obese if they have a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30.
Radiotherapy	A treatment that uses high-energy X-rays to cure or control cancer and other diseases.
Soft diet	Food that is softened by cooking, mashing, blending or puréeing.
Tube feeding	A small tube that is placed in your nose and down into your stomach or directly into your stomach or bowel. It can give you liquid nutrients.
Vitamins	Nutrients which your body needs to grow and stay strong. For example, vitamins A, B, C, D, E, K.

Questions to ask your doctor

Here is a list of questions that you may like to ask. There is also some space for you to write down your own questions if you prefer.

- What eating problems can I expect from treatment?

- Do I have to change my diet?

- How can my diet prevent cancer coming back?

- How can I increase calories?

- How can I increase protein in my diet?

- I'm overweight, can I lose some weight?

Your own questions

1 _____

Answer _____

2 _____

Answer _____

3 _____

Answer _____

4 _____

Answer _____

5 _____

Answer _____

6 _____

Answer _____

>>> Notes



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We would like to extend a special word of thanks to the following for their invaluable contributions to this booklet and/or previous editions:

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Reach to Recovery

Patient Reviewers

Would you like more information?

We hope this booklet has been of help to you. At any time in the future, if you feel you would like more information or someone to talk to, please call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700.

Would you like to be a patient reviewer?

If you have any suggestions as to how this booklet could be improved, we would be delighted to hear from you. The views of patients, relatives, carers and friends are all welcome.



Your comments would help us greatly in the preparation of future information booklets for people with cancer and their carers. If you wish to email your comments, have an idea for a new booklet or would like to review any of our booklets, please contact us at reviewers@irishcancer.ie

If you would prefer to phone or write to us, see contact details below.

Would you like to help us?

The Irish Cancer Society relies entirely on voluntary contributions from the public to fund its programmes of patient care, education and research. This includes patient education booklets. If you would like to support our work in any way – perhaps by making a donation or by organising a local fundraising event – please contact us at CallSave 1850 60 60 60 or email fundraising@irishcancer.ie

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National Cancer Helpline Freefone 1800 200 700

Open Monday to Thursday 9am to 7pm

Friday 9am to 5pm

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