

Preventing Malnutrition

Good nutrition is important—especially if you have cancer. Cancer itself, and cancer treatment, can affect the appetite and how the body digests, absorbs and uses food. When the body is depleted of essential nutrients, it becomes malnourished.

Cancer-related malnutrition can make you tired, weak and unable to receive the treatments you need to get better.

Cancer-related symptoms that can affect nutrition status

Cancer and its treatment can cause the following side effects, which make it difficult to stay nourished:

- Loss of appetite
- Changes in taste or smell
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Weight loss or gain
- Oral complications (mouth sores, difficulty swallowing)
- GI disturbances (diarrhea, constipation)
- Fatigue
- Depression

Consequences of malnutrition for people with cancer

Even if you are able to eat, some cancers (such as those affecting the digestive tract) interfere with the body's ability to digest, absorb or properly metabolize nutrients from food. When your body does not get essential nutrients, malnutrition occurs.

Malnutrition can hamper your ability to heal and recover from cancer in significant ways. Studies show that well-nourished patients can tolerate treatment better with fewer complications and recuperate faster after treatment, while patients who are malnourished experience more treatment delays or interruptions and longer hospital stays.

How nutrition therapy can help during cancer treatment

Nutrition and metabolic support during cancer care can keep you strong and provide the nutrients your body needs to tolerate and recover from treatment. The stronger the body, the faster it can heal.

Specifically, good nutrition during cancer treatment can provide the following benefits:

- Support immune function
- Preserve lean body mass
- Rebuild body tissue
- Increase energy and strength
- Decrease risk of infection
- Improve quality of life

Ways to maintain good nutrition during cancer treatment

Nutrition and metabolic support can keep you strong and nourished before, during and after cancer treatment. Based on your individual situation, your care team may suggest any of the following to help you get the nutrients you need:

- A high-protein, high-calorie diet
- Vitamin and mineral supplementation
- Nutritional powders, shakes and smoothies
- Medications to relieve pain, constipation, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Enteral nutrition (given through a tube inserted into the stomach or intestine)
- Parenteral nutrition (delivered directly into the blood through a vein)



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different