

# Eating Can Be Vitally Important

This is a guide for making nutrition choices. The right choices can often prevent, control, and reverse some of the adverse side effects of chemotherapy. They can also help build and maintain general health, and thus improve chances of successful treatment and recovery.

Many factors can interfere with the ability of the patient in chemotherapy to eat well. These include depression, inactivity, pain, digestive and other physical problems, intestinal obstruction, and reactions to the drugs.


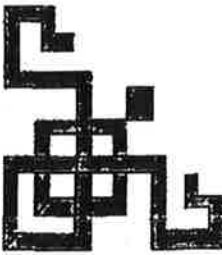
Patients who begin treatment well-nourished tolerate treatment better, possibly survive longer, and have a greater sense of well-being than those whose nutrition is poor initially. However, consuming enough well-chosen foods can become a problem even for the well-nourished patient as treatment goes on.

Unless someone – preferably the patient – conscientiously plans and follows through, there is a real danger of malnutrition. Not only is malnutrition a serious condition in itself, but it greatly increases the difficulty of chemotherapy treatment. The patient experiences more drug side effects, and the treatment may be refused or curtailed. A sound nutritional plan is designed to help break this vicious cycle.

Given the information known about specific chemotherapy drugs and their nutrition-related characteristics, a nutrition strategy can be developed for each patient, taking into account the particular drugs being administered, as well as the particular circumstances of the patient's health status and treatment.

In addition to combating the side effects of drugs, diet and nutrition planning give cancer patients and those who care about them an element of control in circumstances that often seem beyond control.

Once patients find they can reduce the side effects of their chemotherapy through what they eat, they come to feel that they are actively participating in their own recovery process. That very participation can only be a positive step in shaping the hopeful optimism that could well be a factor in recovery.



## **Nutrition & Chemotherapy: What Patients Should Know**

Fruits and vegetables provide some of your iron and most of your vitamin A and C, and are good sources of folic acid and magnesium as well. Fruits may help stimulate the appetite, and their organic acid content helps in the absorption of iron and calcium.

Most fruits and vegetables are nutrient-dense, low in calories, low in fat, and high in fiber. Fruit juices are higher in calories and lower in fiber than the comparable fruit.

### **The Whole-Grain Breads and Cereals Group**

One serving equals:

- 1 slice of whole-grain bread, or an equivalent serving of whole-grain baked goods
- 1 cup ready-to-eat high-fiber cereal; or ½ to ¾ cup cooked cereal, pasta, or macaroni (all whole-grain inly)

Daily servings recommended:

- 4 or more per day

Whole-grain products contribute carbohydrate calories, fiber, and the vitamins niacin, B1, and B2. This group includes: wheat, corn, oats, buckwheat, rice, and rye made into products such as: breads, biscuits, muffins, waffles, pancakes, cooked or ready-to-eat cereals, noodles, pasta, rice, rolled oats, etc.

The proteins in grains are incomplete. That is, they do not contain all of the essential acids that are the building blocks of proteins. Different grains can be combined to meet protein needs, but doing so requires a thorough knowledge of grain complements and special menu planning. Do not attempt to meet protein needs through grains alone without the guidance of a dietitian or other qualified nutritionist.

This group provides calories in an inexpensive way. If you need additional calories, but not protein, you can add servings of whole-grain foods to your daily diet.