

Eating Well during Treatment for Head and Neck Cancer

Your current weight: _____

Your daily calorie needs: _____

Your daily protein needs: _____

Your daily fluid needs: _____

If you cannot eat solid foods:

Brand of liquid nutrition: _____

Amount: _____

Your **extra** daily fluid needs: _____

Good nutrition helps you tolerate cancer treatment better and with fewer side effects. You need more calories and protein during cancer treatment. Following a diet high in calories and protein will help you stay healthy and strong.

These side effects of head and neck cancer treatments can change the way you eat:

- Changes in taste and smell
- Difficult chewing or swallowing
- Loss of appetite
- Sore or dry mouth and throat
- Thick saliva

Do the swallowing exercises your speech therapist gives you, even if it is not comfortable. They keep your swallowing muscles strong. If you have questions or concerns, call your doctor or speech therapist.

Tips for Eating Well

Weigh yourself one to two times per week at home or at your doctor appointments.

- Losing weight during treatment means you are not getting enough calories and protein.
- Set a goal to prevent weight loss. If you want to lose weight, wait until your treatment is over.

Eat five to six times a day.

- Have small meals every 2-3 hours.
- Be consistent. Eat at the same times every day, even if you don't feel hungry.
- Keep a list of what you eat and drink each day. This can help you make sure you eat enough.

You may need to change the foods you eat as your treatment goes on.

You may be eating normally when your treatment begins. You may need to change to a soft diet later because of side effects. This is normal.

- Some people need a liquid diet at the end of treatment because it gets hard to swallow. Your dietitian will tell you what types of liquids you need to stay healthy.
- A few weeks after treatment ends, it will be easier to eat normal foods again.

Choose soft, moist foods high in calories and protein.

See the Table 1 for suggestions.

Add more calories and protein to the foods you eat.

- Use full-fat yogurt, cheese, and milk. Avoid non-fat or skim dairy products.
- Add powdered or evaporated milk to casseroles, soups, hot cereal, potatoes, gravies, and smoothies.
 - Mix equal amounts of dried milk powder and hot cereal together. Add liquid and cook as directed.
 - Add 1/3 cup dried milk powder to each 2 cups of mashed potatoes.
 - Add 4 tablespoons dried milk powder to each cup of sauce, gravy, soup, or custard.
- Add grated cheese and plain Greek yogurt to soups.
- Top foods with avocado, olive and canola oil, or peanut butter.
- Have canned fruit with cottage cheese.
- Top a baked potato with cheese, sour cream, chili, or bean soup.

Drink liquids without caffeine to stay hydrated and to keep your mouth moist.

Replace most calorie-free beverages such as water, coffee, and tea with drinks that have calories:

- Milk or chocolate milk
- Fruit juices
- Sports drinks
- Nutrition supplements (See Table 2.)

Table 1: Suggestions for High-Calorie, High-Protein Soft Foods

Food Group	Soft Foods	
Breads, cereals, and starches	Hot cereal Pancakes or waffles Potatoes	Noodles Rice
Soups	Bean Chicken noodle Creamy soups Potato	Split pea Tomato Lentil
Meats and meat substitutes	Chicken pot pie Chicken salad Eggs Fish, well-moistened Hummus Lasagna	Meatloaf Peanut butter Ravioli Refried beans Tofu Tuna salad
Casseroles	Bread stuffing Beef stroganoff	Macaroni and cheese Tuna rice casserole
Dairy	Cheese, full-fat Cottage cheese, full-fat Yogurt, full-fat	
Fruit	Applesauce Bananas Canned fruits	
Vegetables	All kinds, cooked until soft Adding butter, cheese, or oil is recommended	

Food Group	Soft Foods	
Desserts	Bread pudding Cakes, soft and moist Cheesecake Custard Eggnog Ice cream, gelato, or sherbet	Mousse Pies with smooth filling such as pumpkin, chocolate, or lemon Pudding Soufflé
Fats and Toppings	Avocado Butter Cream cheese Creamer Gravy Half and half Honey	Jelly or jam Mayonnaise Olive or vegetable oil Peanut butter Sour cream Whipped cream

Table 2: High-Calorie, High-Protein Nutrition Supplements

Product	Calories (per 8 oz.)	Protein (per 8 oz.)	Where Available
Benecalorie®	330 (per 1.5 oz.)	7 g (per 1.5 oz.)	Internet
Boost®	240	10 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Boost® Breeze	250	9 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Boost® Compact	240 (per 4 oz.)	10 g (per 4 oz.)	Grocery stores, internet
Boost Glucose Control®*	190	16 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Boost Plus®	360	14 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Boost® VHC (Very High Calorie)	530	22 g	Internet
Carnation Instant Breakfast® mixed with whole milk	280	15 g	Grocery stores
Ensure®	270	9 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Ensure® Clear	180	8 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Ensure Compact®	220 (per 4 oz)	9 g (per 4 oz.)	Grocery stores, Internet
Ensure Enlive®	350	20 g	Grocery stores, Internet
Ensure Plus®	350	13 g	Grocery stores, Internet

