

## Nutrition and Exercise for Individuals with Cancer

Here are ways to eat healthy foods, be active, and keep a healthy weight before and after treatment. These tips help lower the chance of cancer coming back or developing other types of cancer. Talk to your dietitian or other provider about nutrition and exercise goals that are best for you.

### **Get 30 minutes or more of exercise most days of the week.**

- Aim for at least 4 days each week.
- Do things that raise your heart rate.

Examples include:

- Going for a run
- Taking a brisk walk
- Swimming laps
- Use stairs instead of an elevator

Remember it does not have to be all at once. (Example: Take a brisk walk for 10 minutes in the morning and again in the evening.)

### **Stretch and strengthen your body.**

- Do activities such as yoga to stretch your muscles.
- Lift light weights or use a resistance band to strengthen your muscles.
- Aim for activities that stretch and strengthen your muscles 2 days each week.
  - This helps reduce injury and soreness. It also improves range of motion.

### **Maintain a healthy weight (BMI 18.9-24.9).**

If you have any questions about body weight, schedule an appointment with one of our Dietitians, who can discuss this with you.

- If weight loss is recommended by your healthcare professional, aim to lose no more than 1-2 pounds per week. Be sure weight loss happens slowly over time.
- Maintaining a healthy weight for your body can lower the risk of many diseases, including cancer.

### **Eat foods that are high in fiber.**

- Adults need 25-35 grams of fiber daily from plant-based foods.
- Choose different, colorful fruits and vegetables.
  - These are good sources of vitamins and other nutrients.
- Aim to eat at least 3 cups of non-starchy vegetables each day such as spinach, squash, peppers, and broccoli.
- Have 2 cups of fruit in your diet each day.
  - An apple, banana, or orange is about 1 cup.
- Choose whole grains such as whole wheat pasta and wheat bread instead of white pasta or white bread.
- Beans, nuts, and seeds are good sources of fiber.
  - Examples: Black beans, almonds, and flax seeds

### **Eat foods that are low in fat.**

- 50 grams of fat per day is the general goal.
- Limit foods with unhealthy saturated and trans-fats such as dairy, meats, fried foods, and some packaged foods.
  - Choose lean meats, low-fat dairy and baked foods instead for a healthier option.
- Choose foods with healthy, unsaturated fats such as olive and canola oils, nuts, seeds, avocados, and fish.
- Aim to eat at least 2 servings of fish per week. One serving is 4 ounces or 3/4 cup of fish —the size of the palm of a hand.

### **Limit sugary foods and drinks.**

- Choose foods with natural sugars such as fruit if you want something sweet.
- Check food labels for added sugars.
- Aim for less than 25-36 grams of added sugar per day. Watch out for high fructose corn syrup, brown sugar, evaporated cane sugar, or honey in the ingredients list.
- Choose water most often, and then other unsweetened drinks. Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.

**Choose lean proteins such as chicken, turkey, fish, and other plant-based proteins like beans, nuts, and seeds.**

- Limit red meats such as beef, pork, and lamb.
  - Aim for less than 12-18 ounces per week.
- Limit/avoid processed meats such as bacon, sausage, ham, deli meats, and hot dogs.
  - Meats, especially ones that are processed with nitrate or nitrite chemicals, are linked to increased cancer risk.

**Watch the amount of salt you eat.**

- Less than 2,000 milligrams per day is best.
- Flavor food with herbs and spices instead of table salt.
- Limit foods that are processed with sodium such as baked goods, frozen meals, and canned foods.

**Drink plenty of fluids**

- Choose water most often.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Stay hydrated. Drink enough that you are not thirsty and your urine is clear or light yellow.
- Limit alcohol use. Have no more than two drinks per day for biologically male or one drink per day for biologically female, if any.

Check with your provider or a dietitian before taking vitamins or supplements. Eating a variety of healthy foods is the best way to get nutrients.

Some people are allergic, can't tolerate or prefer to avoid certain foods. This can make it hard to get proper nutrition. A dietitian or provider can help you decide if you need vitamins or supplements. Let your provider and pharmacist know if you are taking any vitamins or supplements. They may interfere with some medications or treatments.

**Learn more.**

Our dietitians and exercise specialists in the Wellness and Integrative Health Center provide personal plans based on a patient's diagnosis and health needs during and after treatment at Huntsman Cancer Institute. Please call 801-587-4585 if you have any questions, concerns or would like a more specialized plan. [huntsmancancer.org/wellness](https://huntsmancancer.org/wellness)