

"There is a lot of evidence that when we get active and when we eat certain foods, we can modulate how our immune system responds. And in fact, our immune system is the checkpoint, to make sure cancer does not develop in our bodies or that when it does develop, we can counter it." - Cynthia Thomson, PhD, RDN

"We have increasing evidence that people who eat a Mediterranean diet, an anti-inflammatory diet, or score high on the healthy eating index, where the quality of the diet is very plant-based, lower in fat, lower in processed foods, particularly processed meats, have better outcomes in terms of survival." - Cynthia Thomson, PhD, RDN

"When thinking about adjusting your diet to help manage your symptoms, ask for a referral to an oncology dietitian. They can really help you assess what you are eating, the quality of your diet, and any nutrient deficiencies or eating patterns. They can also help you move towards a long-term cancer survivorship eating plan, particularly one that's more plant-based." - Cynthia Thomson, PhD, RDN

"From a social work perspective, engaging in group activities or walking with a friend or a family member can reduce your feelings of isolation, and it can actually help you in building that support network that you need through your cancer journey, which is very very important. Having someone next to you not just to talk and just to make small exercise that can help you a lot during your cancer treatment. Maintaining an active lifestyle helps patients manage their treatment better and contribute to a higher quality of life during and after cancer treatment." - Joelys Gonzalez, BSW

"Utilize your healthcare team and all the resources available to you. An oncology dietitian, a physical therapist, a exercise specialist, a movement specialist and/or a mental health professional can get to know your needs, abilities, diagnosis, treatment, side effects, and barriers to tailor a personalized plan for you. There are resources available to you that are absolutely incredible and free. There are resources available that can help you accomplish whatever you need to do." - Nicole Normandin, LCSW

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

- Common psychosocial factors impacting cancer patients and their ability to maintain proper nutrition are anxiety, depression, stress, and cognitive changes, like chemo brain.
 - Anxiety can lead to appetite reduction or skipping meals. Depression can make it difficult to be motivated to buy or prep food. Stress can lead to erratic eating patterns, such as overeating or undereating.
 - Solutions include:
 - seeking psychological help through counseling for anxiety and depression
 - utilizing cognitive behavioral therapy techniques or behavior change techniques like goal setting, reminders to eat, and food journals
 - involving friends or family to help you with meal prep
 - gaining emotional support through a support group
 - practicing mindful eating

NUTRITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Seek the help of a registered oncology dietitian. They can help create and personalize a long-term cancer survivorship eating plan.
- Consider writing down or using an app to monitor what you eat for a few days as a form of self-regulation. Share it with your dietitian for feedback.
- Emphasize a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins to support overall health and recovery.
- Focus on anti-inflammatory and nutrient-dense foods to meet increased nutritional needs without excessive calorie intake. Adequate protein is essential for tissue repair and immune function, especially during and after treatment.
- Maintain a healthy weight through balanced nutrition and physical activity, as weight control is crucial for secondary cancer prevention and survivorship.
- Ensure adequate fluid intake to support bodily functions and to mitigate treatment side effects like dehydration.
- Tailor dietary choices to manage treatment-related side effects such as nausea, loss of appetite, and taste changes.

RESOURCES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient Empowerment Network • American Cancer Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Nutrition for People with Cancer ◦ Physical Activity and the Person with Cancer • American Institute for Cancer Research • American Physical Therapy Association Oncology • Cancer Dietitian • Cancer Exercise App | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancer Support Community • Eatright.org • Headspace • Ina: The Intelligent Nutrition Assistant • Nutrition in Cancer Care • Moving Through Cancer • OncoLink • Side Effect Support, LLC |
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