



Eating during cancer treatment



Eating is an important part of cancer treatment. It can help you feel better and stay stronger. When you have cancer, you may need to eat differently than what you might think of as healthy to keep up your strength. **Try these tips:**



Talk with your doctor or dietitian to create a plan

They can create a plan to help with any side effects from treatment that cause eating problems.

For example:

- If you have nausea (feel sick to your stomach), they can prescribe medicine to take before meals
- If you have trouble chewing and swallowing, they can share a list of soft foods



Focus on high-calorie, high-protein foods

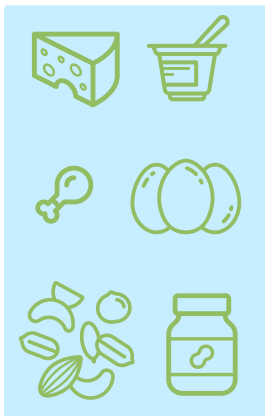
The most important thing is to make sure you get the calories and protein your body needs. This will help your body rebuild tissues, keep your weight up, and stay strong.

Ways to add calories to foods



- Melt butter over potatoes, rice, and cooked vegetables
- Add milk products to food, such as grated cheese on vegetables and heavy or whipping cream to pancakes, waffles, and fruit
- Use regular salad dressings and mayonnaise, instead of low-fat
- Add jelly, honey, or jam to bread, crackers, and fruit

Ideas to eat high-protein foods



- Milk products, such as cheese with crackers and Greek yogurt in smoothies
- Eggs, such as hard-boiled eggs added to salads or made into egg salad
- Meats, chicken, and fish, such as cooked meats added to soups, salads, and omelets
- Beans, seeds, and nuts, such as sunflower seeds or walnuts sprinkled on salads and desserts, and peanut butter spread on toast or blended in a milkshake



Take in enough fluids

Drink liquids throughout the day, especially on days when you can't eat. Most adults need about 8 to 12 cups (64 to 96 ounces) a day. Try to keep a water bottle nearby. **Try these ideas for liquids:**



Clear liquids to drink throughout the day

- Clear broths, such as chicken or vegetable
- Clear carbonated drinks
- Apple, cranberry, and grape juices
- Popsicles
- Tea
- Juice



Full liquids to get more calories and protein

- Yogurt
- Milkshakes
- Smooth ice cream
- Tomato and vegetable juice
- Meal replacements, such as Ensure, Boost, and instant breakfast drinks



Get ready and plan to eat well

Planning your meals ahead of time helps make sure you'll eat well all week. **To get started:**

- Stock up on foods that need little or no cooking such as frozen dinners and ready-to-eat cooked foods.
- Make extras. You can freeze or refrigerate leftovers. That way, you'll have something to make quickly.
- Ask friends or family to help you shop and cook. Create a grocery list so that it's easy for them to shop for you.



Follow food safety tips

Some cancer treatments can weaken your immune system and raise your chance of serious infections. **Follow these food safety tips:**

- Wash your hands before eating or preparing foods
- Wash fruits and veggies well – rub while holding under running water
- Cook foods to the proper temperature – use a food thermometer to check meat



Go to [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) for a chart of safe cooking temperatures.

To schedule a visit at Robert E. Hardy Cancer Center, call 615-341-4383