



Nutrition and Lung Cancer

By Susan Haines, Registered Dietitian (RD)

Maintaining Weight

Focus on consuming high calorie and high protein foods, so that portion sizes do not need to be big. For example, add some grated cheese onto pasta, sliced hardcooked egg onto salad or cubed chicken into soup. This will boost the calories and protein in the dish. If you do not have much energy to prepare food, keep some easy items on hand that need little or no preparation. Peanut butter, canned salmon and yogurt are all good choices that provide protein without the need to cook. See table 1. for a list of protein foods

Maintaining Hydration

Most people need 1.5 – 2.0 litres (6 – 8 cups) of fluid daily. Fluid comes from more than just water. Milk, juices and soups are all good sources. For those who are losing weight during treatment, it is a smart move to choose fluids that also provide calories. For those who have trouble drinking enough, it is easier to drink small amounts often throughout the day. Try this trick to help keep track:

In the morning, put a 2 litre container filled with water in the refrigerator.



Whenever you have a drink of any kind, pour out the same amount of water from the jug. Remember to count soups, milkshakes, popsicles, etc. By the end of the day, the jug should be empty, or close to it. If it is not, then you did not drink enough that day.

Signs of dehydration include dry mouth, weakness and dizziness. It is important to let your health care team know if you are unable to drink very much and are having these symptoms.

Before Treatment

Preparing meals ahead can make it easier to get through the rough spots. Freeze meals, or stock up on ready-made frozen dinners so that there is food on hand

when you don't have the energy to shop and cook. These meals should be fairly mild in flavour and soft, just in case you are having side effects from treatment like a sore throat.

During Treatment

Take advantage of friends and family when they offer to help. Make a list of tasks that would make life easier. Let the friend who is a good cook bring you a meal.

A pot of soup or a casserole delivered to your door when you are tired can mean the difference between eating and missing a meal. Let the friend who is allergic to the kitchen pick up groceries.

After Treatment

Don't expect that your energy level will recover as soon as treatment ends. Good nutrition plays a key role in healing and regaining strength. Continue following the advice above to help you achieve your nutrition goals.

If you are having significant problems at any stage of treatment, you can ask to see a dietitian at your treatment facility.

TABLE 1

Animal Protein	Dairy Protein	Vegetable Protein
Beef	Milk	Legumes
Chicken, turkey	Cheese	Eg. black beans, chick peas
Eggs	Milk-based soup	Kidney beans, lentils,
Fish	Custard	Navy beans, etc.
Lamb	Pudding	Nuts, seeds, nut butters
Pork	Yogurt	Soy milk, tofu



Nutrition Hints and Tips

By Christine Asik BAsc., MSc

Many people receiving cancer treatment find their tastes and food preferences are different than they had been in the past. You may find you can no longer tolerate foods you used to enjoy. On the other hand, you may be hungry for foods you rarely ate in the past. Do not be alarmed by these changes; they are quite common. Eat whatever you are hungry for now.

If you are feeling **sensitive to food odors**, try eating cold or room temperature foods. Foods served hot often have a strong smell. You can also choose foods that do not need to be cooked, such as cold sandwiches, crackers and cheese, yogurt and fruit, cold cereal and milk.

If you have a **metallic taste in your mouth**, try using plastic eating utensils and glass cooking pots. Some people find that meat tastes metallic after treatment. If you find meat metallic tasting, try eating other protein-rich foods like fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, tofu, and soy milk. You can also try masking the metallic taste of meats by marinating your meat in orange juice, lemon juice, Italian dressing, vinegar, sweet and sour sauce, wine, soy sauce or teriyaki sauce.

Keep your mouth clean. Keeping your teeth brushed and flossed can help get rid of bad tastes in your mouth. You can also try rinsing your mouth with baking soda (¼ tsp) in water (1 cup) before and after eating to help clear your taste buds.

Eat early in the day. Your appetite is usually greatest at the beginning of the day. Take advantage of your appetite by making breakfast your largest meal of the day. Don't wait till you feel hungry to eat.

Eat small amounts throughout the day. It is often easier to eat several small meals throughout the day rather than three large meals.

Talk to a dietitian about **Nutritional Supplements** (such as Boost® or Ensure®) if you are not able to eat enough throughout the day.

For more information: Books

- Elise Mecklinger with the Princess Margaret Hospital Dietitians (2006). [Goes Down Easy: Recipes to help you cope with the challenge of eating during cancer treatment.](#) Toronto
- Katen Moore and Libby Schmais (2001). [Living Well with Cancer.](#) New York.
- Kim Thiboldeaux (2007). [The Total Cancer Wellness Guide: Reclaiming Your Life After Diagnosis,](#) Dallas,
- Maureen Keane, M.S., and Daniella Chace (2007). [What to Eat if you have Cancer: Healing Foods that Boost Your Immune System.](#) New York.

For more information: Website

- Canadian Cancer Society www.cancer.ca Go to "coping with cancer" and then to "nutrition"
- Dietitians of Canada at www.dietitians.ca
- The American Institute for Cancer Research at www.aicr.org
- Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca Food and Nutrition, Canada's Food Guide Lung Cancer Canada.

Lung Cancer Canada

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Printing generously donated through an unrestricted education grant from Pfizer Canada

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