

Reducing Barriers to Pain and Fatigue Management



Nutrition to Manage Fatigue

Managing and Optimizing Your Nutrition Can Help to:

- Prevent or reverse nutrient deficiencies (For example, too little calcium or vitamins)
- Preserve lean body mass
- Better tolerate treatments
- Minimize nutrition-related side effects and complications (nausea, vomiting and dehydration)
- Maintain strength and energy
- Protect immune function, decreasing risk of infection
- Aid in recovery and healing
- Maximize quality of life

Poor Nutrition - Its Effects

In people with cancer, certain changes in nutrition can affect fatigue levels. These changes include the ability to process nutrients, increase energy requirements, and decrease intake of food, fluids, and some minerals.

These changes can be caused by:

- Changes in the body's ability to break down food products (metabolism)
- Competition between your cancer and your body for nutrients
- Poor appetite
- Nausea/vomiting
- Diarrhea or bowel obstruction

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Fatigue can affect your interest in food, ability to shop, and to prepare healthy meals. Some suggestions include:

- Be familiar with your treatment and possible side effects
- Make sure you get enough rest
- Save favorite foods for non-treatment days so they won't be linked to an unfavorable event
- Poor nutrition and not eating can increase your fatigue
- If unable to eat regular size meals, eat small meals more often
- Include protein in your diet (fish, beans, milk, cheese)
- Drink plenty of fluids (8-10 cups per day)
- If unable to eat, drink high calorie/protein drinks (milk, juices, smoothies, milkshakes, nutrition supplements)
- Stock your pantry to avoid extra shopping trips
- Keep foods handy that need little to no preparation (pudding, peanut butter, tuna fish, cheese, eggs)
- Do some cooking in advance and freeze meal-sized portions
- Eat larger meals when feeling better
- Talk to family/friends about help with shopping/cooking

Please ask your physician to refer you to a dietitian if you:

- Have had minimal food intake for 5 days or more
- Have difficulties with chewing or swallowing
- Are receiving tube feedings or IV nutrition (TPN)
- Have a pressure ulcer or skin breakdown
- Are not able to maintain weight
- Wish to see a dietitian about your nutrition concerns