

Diet in Cancer

Why is good nutrition important during cancer treatment?

Good nutrition during cancer treatment is important for children to:

- Tolerate treatment better
- Recover better and faster
- Feel better and enjoy better quality of life
- Maintain body weight and store of nutrients
- Lower risk of infection
- Keep up strength and energy
- Prevent body tissues from breaking down
- Rebuild tissues that cancer treatment may harm

What kinds of food does your child need?

A good rule to follow is to eat a variety of different foods every day. No one food or group of foods contains all nutrients your child needs. The diet should include proteins, carbohydrates, fats, water, vitamins, and minerals.

What are proteins and their sources?

Proteins are necessary for growth and repair of the body. When there is inadequate protein, the body starts breaking down muscles for energy, making patients vulnerable to infections as well delay recovery. Children with cancer require more protein than others to recover from the effects of surgery, chemotherapy, or

radiation therapy.

Sources of protein include:

Non vegetarian sources - fish, poultry, lean red meat, and eggs

Vegetarian sources - dairy products, paneer, nuts, dried beans, peas and lentils, and soya

What are carbohydrates and their sources?

Carbohydrates are the major source of energy, and give the body fuel (calories) for physical activity and maintain organ function. The best sources of carbohydrates include:

Fruits and Vegetables: Raw or cooked vegetables, fruits, and fruit juices also provide certain vitamins (such as A and C), minerals and fiber. According to some recommendations, fresh fruits and raw vegetables should be avoided at low neutrophil counts. All fruits/vegetables that are to be consumed raw should be soaked along with the peels in potassium permanganate water.

Grains: Grains, such as wheat, brown rice, corn, oats provide a variety of carbohydrates and B vitamins.

Other sources of carbohydrates include bread, potatoes, rice, spaghetti, pasta, cereals, dried beans, corn, peas, and beans. These foods also contain vitamin B and fiber. Sweets give only carbohydrates, and very little other nutrients.

What are fats and their sources?

Fats are a rich source of energy (calories) for the body. Fats are important for children who

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lose weight during treatment. However, all fats are not equal. Unsaturated fats are healthier than saturated fats and trans fats.

Source of fat include:

Monounsaturated fats: vegetable oils such as olive, canola, and peanut oils.

Polyunsaturated fats: vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, corn, and flaxseed oils. Seafood also mainly contain polyunsaturated fats.

Saturated fats: animal sources, such as meat and poultry, whole or reduced-fat milk, cheese, and butter. Some vegetable oils like coconut, palm kernel oil, and palm oil are saturated.

Trans fats: vegetable oils are processed into margarine or hydrogenated vegetable oils.

Essential fatty acids are needed to build cells and make hormones. Good sources of essential fatty acids are soya bean, canola and walnut oils.

Why is hydration important?

Water and liquids are vital to health. If a child does not take enough liquids, or loses liquids from vomiting or diarrhea, dehydration may occur. Fruits and vegetables also provide liquids to the body apart from water. Hydration is maintained by all liquids in diet like soups, juices, milk, etc.

How to help the child eat well?

Eating well is important for children with cancer, but don't make it into a war. Here are few tips that will help a child eat better:

- Give smaller, more frequent meals

- Serve in smaller plates
- Let the child eat whenever hungry
- Give the biggest meal when child is hungriest
- Always have food on hand
- Try bland foods
- Avoid acidic foods
- Make foods easier to swallow
- Give fluids between meals instead of with meals
- Use colorful cups, mugs, and straws
- Use cookie cutters to cut shapes from sandwiches, gelatin, meats, and cheese
- Make faces out of fruits and vegetables
- Serve food in unusual containers or on cartoon character plates
- Invite the child's friends to share meals
- Encourage physical activity

How to serve more protein and calories?

If your child is having eating problems, it is important to make every bite count. Here are some tips to serve more protein and calories.

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Food	Add to
Cheese and Paneer	Vegetables, soups, on biscuits with egg, chicken, fish, upma, dosa, rice, noodles or parathas
Milk	Beverages and cooking e.g. in soups, vegetables, upma, sheera
Supplement powder	Milk
Milk powder	Milk, milk shakes, ice-cream
Honey, Jam, Sugar, Jaggery	Roti, milk, fruits, dahi or just as it is
Boiled eggs	Vegetables
Egg white	Soups, caramel custard
Peanuts	Butter, bananas, fruits, dahi
Dry fruits	Sheera
Butter	Soups, vegetables, roti