



NUTRITION FOR
PEOPLE LIVING WITH
CANCER



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WHAT IS CANCER?

Cancer develops when the cells in our body don't follow the normal process of reproduction. There are many causes for this, including lifestyle habits, genes you inherit, and environmental exposures. It is hard to know which of these caused a person's cancer.

There are many types of cancers, and they are normally named after the area of the body that they started from. Blood cancers are in blood cells and include leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma. Tumor cancers are found in body organs or tissues like breast, lung, colorectal, etc. Some cancers grow and spread quickly while others grow slowly and are less likely to spread to other parts of the body. Some cancers are treated with surgery, while others need chemotherapy or radiation. Often more than one type of treatment gives the best results.

Please note that nutrition needs for cancer vary from person to person. Talk to your Registered Dietitian or other healthcare provider to learn what foods are best for you and your symptoms.

NUTRITION FOR CANCER

How you eat and drink affects your risk, treatment, and recovery from cancer. A diet with lots of fruit, vegetables, protein, healthy fats, and whole grains can help to fight cancer and prevent recurrence. For information on how these foods help to prevent and fight cancer, visit <https://www.aicr.org/>

WAYS TO INCORPORATE MORE FRUITS, VEGETABLES, AND WHOLE GRAINS

See pages 5 & 6 for ideas to incorporate protein and fats.

WAYS TO ADD FRUIT TO YOUR DIET

- Add fresh or frozen berries (blueberries, strawberries, raspberries) to your oatmeal or yogurt
- Wheat toast with peanut butter and banana slices on top
- Wheat toast with avocado
- Smoothies!

WAYS TO ADD VEGETABLES TO YOUR DIET

- Add spinach, kale, or other greens to your smoothies
- Include vegetables in your egg scramble (onion, tomato, spinach, mushroom, bell pepper, etc.)
- Have as a snack with hummus (cucumber, broccoli, zucchini, bell pepper, carrots)

WAYS TO ADD WHOLE GRAINS TO YOUR DIET

- Add a whole grain such as wild rice or quinoa to your soups
- Have oatmeal for breakfast (mix ½ cup oats with 1 cup liquid and microwave for 90 seconds, then add toppings).
- Try having whole wheat pasta or brown/wild rice.



MANAGING SIDE EFFECTS

Cancer treatment can result in many side effects. Below are some nutrition tips to help with some of the most common ones:

NAUSEA AND VOMITING

- Wait to eat/drink until vomiting stops, then drink clear liquids before anything else
- Choose bland foods (toast, plain meat, unseasoned rice/pasta, bananas, applesauce)
- Sip fluids throughout the day (water, Gatorade, etc.)
- Eat cold or room temperature food
- Try ginger candies or ginger tea to help with nausea
- Open Arms has a nausea care pack available for clients. Please call if you would like to add this to your meal delivery.

LOSS OF APPETITE

- Drink between meals to avoid filling up on liquids
- Eat several small meals and snacks throughout the day and keep snacks nearby!
- Make sure you have a high-calorie/protein food with each meal (nuts/nut butters, beans, cheese, meat, eggs, milk, milkshakes, smoothies, etc.)
- Eat your favorite foods or whatever sounds good to you

MOUTH SORES

- Eat foods that are cold or at room temperature
- Add gravy, sauces, salad dressing or broth to soften foods
- Drink through a straw to avoid sore spots in mouth
- Rinse mouth with a medicated mouthwash or a baking soda mouth rinse before and after meals. The following are the ingredients to make a batch of baking soda mouth rinse. Do not swallow (only rinse) and prepare a new batch each day. Mix ½ tsp salt, 1 tsp baking soda and 1 quart of water.
- Avoid hot, spicy, and acidic foods along with carbonated drinks and alcohol.

FATIGUE

- Order groceries online for pick-up or delivery (many grocery stores offer free pick-up)
- On days you have more energy, cook food in bulk to have meals on hand.
- Rely more on ready-to-eat foods, frozen/canned fruits and vegetables and snacks.
- If eating makes you more fatigued, eat small frequent meals instead of three larger meals



DIET TYPES TO HELP WITH SIDE EFFECTS

If you are experiencing severe side effects from treatment, you may need to adopt one of the following diets temporarily while the symptoms persist. Call our Registered Dietitians to see how your Open Arms meals can fit into one of these diets.

BLAND FOODS DIET

Chemotherapy treatment may cause taste changes. When this happens, many people find eating bland foods more tolerable. Avoid fried/greasy food, alcohol, caffeine, pickles and other fermented foods, dried fruits, and seasoned meats. The following are examples of bland foods. Open Arms has a menu called “flavor neutral” that is available to clients.

- Eggs
- Dairy products (Greek yogurt, milk, cheese, cottage cheese, etc.)
- Rice, Oatmeal, pasta, crackers, bread
- Peanut butter
- Pudding and custard
- Plain chicken, turkey or beef
- Canned fruits along with apple sauce, bananas and melons
- Cooked, canned and frozen vegetables
- Soup, especially broth based



HIGH CALORIE DIET

Cancer and cancer treatment can cause a decrease in appetite and weight loss. To get enough calories and nutrition, you may need to eat more high calorie foods. The following are ways to add those foods to your diet:

- Mix peanut butter or protein powder into your oatmeal and cereal
- Have avocado toast or add avocado to smoothies
- Drink milk, chocolate milk or smoothies instead of low-calorie drinks
- Have snacks like hard-boiled eggs, cottage cheese, yogurt, peanut butter with banana, etc for extra calories and protein
- Drink protein shakes such as Ensure/Boost or make a protein shake with milk and protein powder
- Add beans and lentils to soups and salads
- Eat fatty fish, such as salmon

SOFT DIET

You may experience chewing/swallowing issues depending on the type of cancer you have, making a soft diet necessary. Below are general guidelines, but it is recommended to speak with a speech language pathologist and Registered Dietitian to determine which foods are safe for you to eat.

- Smooth nut butters, beans, lentils, tofu, ground meats, fish and scrambled eggs
- Mashed potatoes, soft steamed vegetables, oatmeal, soups, shakes
- Applesauce, canned fruit, melon, baked fruit
- Milk, yogurt, cottage cheese
- Use a blender to puree your favorite foods

OPEN ARMS IS HERE TO HELP

YOUR OPEN ARMS MENU

Clients with cancer may choose any Open Arms menu according to their health needs. While we do not have a menu planned specifically for cancer, each of our menus features important nutrients that you need to manage your health. If you are experiencing taste changes and feel a bland menu would work best for you, we do have our “flavor neutral” menu available. If you have other health conditions or side effects, our nutrition team members are available to help you choose a menu that best fits your needs.

GET IN TOUCH WITH OPEN ARMS

Open Arms has a team of Registered Dietitians that provide free-of-cost nutrition education and counseling to Open Arms clients over the phone. If you have a question about your meals or want to schedule a one-on-one call, contact the Open Arms nutrition team!

Our Registered Dietitians can help:

- Recommend a menu based on your needs and preferences
- Answer your questions about food, nutrition, and health
- Provide nutrition coaching to support you in reaching your health goals
- Suggest additional food resources if you need them
- Give you meal and snack ideas according to your likes, dislikes, and medical needs
- Provide nutrition information about Open Arms meals, such as calorie, nutrient, and allergen information



612-540-7760 Ask to speak with a registered dietitian



nutrition@openarmsmn.org

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CONNECTIONS

Cancer

Health and Wellbeing

- **American Cancer Society:** Dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem.
 - Website: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/understanding-cancer.html>
- **Cancer Survivorship Care Plans:** Assist with creating a cancer survivorship plan
 - Web: <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer-survivors/life-after-cancer/survivorship-care-plans.html>
- **Gilda's Club:** Free social and emotional support for everyone currently impacted by cancer
 - Phone Number: 612-227-2147
 - Website: <https://www.gildasclubtwincities.org/>
- **Livestrong:** Support for those navigating cancer and their caregivers.
 - Phone Number: 877-236-8820
 - Website: <https://www.livestrong.org/we-can-help>
- **Pathways-Holistic Healing:** Serves individuals who seek healing for body, mind, heart and spirit.
 - Phone Number: 651-300-2432
 - Website: <https://pathwaysminneapolis.org/>
- **Understand Cancer Together:** Help confidently navigate important conversations & decisions
Find Local support at <https://www.supportnearme.com/>
 - Website: <https://www.understandcancertogether.com/>
- **National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship:** Advocates for quality cancer care
 - Website: <https://www.canceradvocacy.org/>

Cancer-Specific Resources

- **A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation:** Innovative lung cancer research, raise awareness, education, and supports lung cancer patients and families.
 - Website: <https://abreathofhope.org/>
- **Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF):** Find educational resources and support services
 - Website: <https://melanoma.org/patients-caregivers/>
- **SHARE:** Supports, educates, and empowers women affected by breast, ovarian, uterine, or metastatic breast cancer, with a special focus on medically underserved communities.
 - Website: <https://www.sharecancersupport.org/>
- **Us TOO:** Support groups across the U.S. & abroad that help men & their families make informed decisions about prostate cancer.
 - Website: <https://www.ustoo.org/>
- **Colorectal Cancer Alliance:** Empowers allies to provide support for patients & families
 - Website: <https://www.ccalliance.org/>
- **FireFly Sisterhood:** Peer support between those impacted with breast cancer.
 - Phone Number: 612-412-7713
 - Website: <https://fireflysisterhood.org/> (Completed online form to get connected)
- **LUNGEvity:** Mentor programs, message boards, connection with patients, survivors, & caregivers
 - Website: <https://lungevity.org/support>

- **Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered (FORCE):** Improves the lives of individuals & families affected by hereditary breast, ovarian, and related cancers.
 - Website: <https://www.facingourrisk.org/>
- **American Indian Cancer Foundation** – Support to Tribal, Urban Indian, & non-Tribal/Native community.
 - Phone Number: 612-484-9670
 - Website: <https://americanindiancancer.org/>

Financial and Legal Support

- **Angel Foundation:**
 - Phone Number: 612-627-9000
 - Website: <https://mnangel.org/>
- **Pay It Forward Fund:** Financial assistance for women undergoing breast cancer treatment or other types of women's cancer.
 - Phone Number: 952-777-5100
 - Website: <https://www.payitforwardfund.net/>
- **Cancer Legal Care:** Free legal care services to Minnesotans dealing with cancer
 - Phone Number: 651-917-9000
 - Website: <https://www.cancerlegalcare.org/>
- **CancerCARE:** Find assistance from organizations providing financial assistance or practical help
 - Website: <https://www.cancercare.org/>
- **Cancer and Careers:** Empowers and educates people with cancer to thrive in their workplace
 - Phone Number: 646-929-8032 -OR- Email: cancerandcareers@cew.org
 - Website: <https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en>
- **Lazarex:** Patient navigators help with the costs associated with clinical trials.
 - Phone Number: 925-820-4517
 - Website: <https://lazarex.org/> (Complete the Inquiry Form from the contact page)
- **Triage Cancer:** Education on practical & legal issues for those with cancer & their caregivers.
 - Website: <https://triagecancer.org/>

Home Cleaning

- **Cleaning for a Reason:** Free home cleaning for patients with cancer.
 - Email: info@cleaningforareason.org
 - Website: <https://cleaningforareason.org/>
- **Cleaning Up for Cancer:** Free home cleanings to residents in the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area currently undergoing cancer treatment.
 - Phone Number: 612-232-6573
 - Website: <https://cleaningupforcancer.org/>

Nutrition

- **American Institute for Cancer Research**
 - Website: <https://www.aicr.org/>
- **American Cancer Society**
 - Website: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/coping/nutrition.html>