

# Nutrition During Chemotherapy

## Managing and optimizing your nutrition can help to:

- Prevent or reverse nutrient deficiencies.
- 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.
- Decrease risk of infection.
- Aid in recovery and healing.
- Maximize quality of life.

## Effects of poor nutrition

In people with cancer, certain changes in nutrition can affect fatigue levels. These changes include the ability to process nutrients, increase energy needs and decrease intake of food, fluids and some minerals. Fatigue can affect your interest in food and your ability to shop and prepare healthy meals. Poor nutrition and not eating can increase your fatigue.

## 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

## What you can do

- Be familiar with your treatment and possible side effects.
- Make sure you get enough rest.
- Save favorite foods for nontreatment days so they won't be linked to an unfavorable event.
- If you cannot eat regular sized meals, eat small meals more often.
- Include protein in your diet (fish, beans, milk, cheese).
- Drink plenty of fluids (8 to 10 cups per day).
- If you cannot eat, drink high calorie/protein drinks (milk, smoothies, milkshakes, nutrition supplements).
- Stock your pantry to avoid extra shopping trips.
- Keep foods handy that need little to no preparation (pudding, peanut butter, canned tuna fish, cheese, eggs).

- Do some cooking before treatment and freeze meal-sized portions.
- Eat larger meals when feeling better.
- Talk to family/friends about help with shopping/cooking.

## Please ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian if you:

- Have had minimal food intake for five days or more
- Have trouble chewing or swallowing
- Are receiving tube feedings or IV nutrition
- Have a pressure injury or skin breakdown
- Are losing weight
- Wish to see a dietitian about your nutrition concerns

