

# Complicating Conditions

## MANAGING NUTRITION WHEN CANCER ISN'T THE ONLY CONCERN

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EATING WELL DURING CANCER TREATMENT IS TRICKY ENOUGH, BUT ADD A SECOND HEALTH CONDITION INTO THE MIX—LIKE HEART DISEASE OR DIABETES—AND THE SITUATION GETS A LOT MORE COMPLICATED.

When you have cancer, the primary goal is to maintain your weight. It's the one time when your doctor will advise you not to lose those extra 10 pounds you've been trying to shed.

Since it can be difficult to eat because of the side effects of treatment, we give patients tips

for slipping in a few extra calories here and there: Switch from low-fat milk to whole milk or stir a little cream into your soup.

But that can be confusing for people who have maintained heart-healthy, low-fat diets. And increasing calorie intake can wreak havoc on sugar levels for people with diabetes.

Talk with your health-care team about your new dietary needs. If you have diabetes, don't eat less to avoid high blood sugars; it can cause weight loss. You may find that you need to ask your physician to adjust your medications.

The key is to get the biggest bang for your bite. If you aren't comfortable pouring whole milk over your morning Cheerios, then maybe try adding a banana spread with peanut butter.

Pack your diet with natural, whole-grain foods, rather than highly refined, processed food. Shop the perimeter of your grocery store, where you'll find fruits, vegetables, dairy products and lean meats.

Be leery of packaged foods, even if they claim to be "low fat," "healthy" or "all natural." These foods tend to contain extra sugars and sodium, and have lower overall nutritional value.

Making radical shifts in your diet can be upsetting, especially if you thought you've been following the right course to manage other health problems. It may make sense for you to talk with a member of our PsychOncology team to help work through the added stress a new way of eating can bring.

We've provided a list of a few healthy fats to get you started. Case-by-case evaluations are available to all cancer patients in our clinic. Your health may be complicated right now, but eating doesn't have to be.



### HEALTHY FATS

Maintaining a stable weight during treatment is key. Although you may need to eat more fat than usual, it's important to choose wisely. Rather than butter and cream, consider unsaturated fats high in omega 3s. These types of fats come from plants, but are also found in fish. Here are some examples:

- ▶ **Nuts** such as walnuts, almonds
- ▶ **Olive, canola and soybean oils**
- ▶ **Avocado**
- ▶ **Flaxseed**
- ▶ **Natural peanut butter**
- ▶ **Fish** such as salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines and albacore tuna



To make an appointment with a Cancer Center dietitian, call **734-936-6000**.