



LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS DURING CANCER TREATMENT

Enduring cancer treatment is a difficult experience. Keep these lifestyle considerations in mind to help you stay strong and feel your best.

Nutrition

Eating well while undergoing cancer treatment can be a challenging task. The type of cancer, treatment plan, and side effects must be taken into consideration when developing a nutrition plan that will work for you. Depending on your diagnosis and treatment, you may need more calories or protein than usual to increase strength and maintain weight. Your tolerance to food and appetite may change leaving you only able to tolerate soft or bland foods in small portions. Whatever the case may be, making sure that you stay well-nourished throughout the course of treatment may help improve tolerance to medication side effects and even optimize healing and recovery.

Physical Activity

To maintain muscle mass, strength, stamina and bone strength during treatment, aim for at least 150-300 minutes of physical activity per week if you're physically able to do so. If you aren't sure where to start, take it slowly. You might begin with a 5 to 10 minute walk just a few times a week when you're feeling up to it. As you are able, slowly increase your time and before you know it you'll be meeting that 150-300 minute weekly recommendation. By incorporating exercise into your routine, you may notice effects such as decreased stress, nausea, and constipation as well as improved appetite. Before starting any new exercise regimen, always consult with your physician.



Hydration

Staying well hydrated can help prevent symptoms such as fatigue, light-headedness, dry mouth and nausea. Fluid intake recommendations vary based on factors such as exercise, environment, and overall health. For example, if you are losing excess fluid from vomiting or diarrhea, you'll need to increase fluid intake. Water is not your only option to stay hydrated. Beverages such as milk, juice and herbal teas are great options as well. Many fruits and vegetables will also contribute to your daily fluid intake. If you feel that you can't maintain your fluid needs and have a concern for dehydration, please contact your medical provider.

Tobacco & Alcohol

During cancer treatment it is best not to drink alcohol. Alcohol may impair drug breakdown and therefore increase medication side effects. If you have mouth sores, alcohol may also irritate them and make them worse. Always check with your doctor, but to prevent these drug interactions, it is best to limit or avoid alcohol consumption during treatment.

Research has shown that smoking can worsen cancer treatment side effects. It is recommended to quit smoking before starting treatment if you're able, as you'll be less likely to experience negative side effects. Furthermore, smoking makes it more challenging for your body to heal and recover from treatment and surgery and some research even suggests that smoking may make certain chemotherapy drugs less effective. Quitting smoking also decreases the risk of cancer recurrence, so if your treatment is successful you'll be less likely to be diagnosed with a new cancer in the future. If you're trying to quit and need additional support, reach out to ConnectCare3 to be enrolled in our Tobacco Cessation program.

Sources:

Nutrition: <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/staying-active/nutrition/benefits.html>

Physical Activity: <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/staying-active/nutrition/once-treatment-starts.html>

Hydration: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256>

Tobacco & Alcohol: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/smoking-cancer-diagnosis-quit-now/>

Stress Management: <https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/managing-emotions/managing-stress>

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Stress Management

The stress of a cancer diagnosis and treatment can be a lot to endure making stress management an important component of cancer treatment. There are many approaches to stress management that you may find beneficial. Relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga can be particularly helpful in reducing stress. You may also try stress management strategies such as eating & sleeping well, exercising regularly, scheduling daily relaxation time, enjoying the outdoors, or taking time to do what you enjoy. Last but not least, don't be afraid to ask for help and to lean on your support system during this time. Taking time for yourself and letting others help can keep you feeling more relaxed.

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