

Eating Advice during Radiotherapy

This resource is for people who are having radiotherapy treatment. It offers suggestions on how to manage symptoms so you can eat and drink enough during treatment.

During radiotherapy your body needs more energy and protein than usual. The goal during treatment is to **maintain** your weight and **meet** your energy and protein needs. The benefits of maintaining weight during treatment include:

- A healthy immune system, which helps you to heal and fight off infection
- Improved recovery from your treatment.
- Reduces hospital admission due to poor eating and not drinking enough fluids.
- Assists strength and energy levels

Record your weight weekly and contact your nurse or dietitian if you are losing weight.

If you are losing weight and/or not eating enough, try:

- Eating smaller, more frequent meals
- Aiming for 6 small meals per day
- Making every mouthful count – see the table on page 2 for suggestions
- Eating snacks high in energy and protein – see the table on page 2 for suggestions

Your Dietitian can help you with food choices to suit your needs as well as the right amount.

Food Preparation Hints

You may need to stay close to the hospital during treatment instead of at home. Think about what cooking equipment you will be able to access.

- A handheld blender is a useful kitchen tool. Use it to make milkshakes, smoothies or for pureeing food.
- Think about using ready-to-eat, frozen or tinned foods if you do not feel like cooking. These are also useful if you can only use simple cooking equipment.

Simple ways to add energy and protein	
Drink nourishing fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Flavoured or plain milk ✓ Add cream/ice-cream/milk powder/nut spreads to milkshakes and smoothies
Enhance meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cook in butter or oil ✓ Add cheese/cream to meals ✓ Use sauces/gravies ✓ Add extra butter/margarine to bread or vegetables ✓ Enrich milk with milk powder as directed
Smart snacking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spread bread/biscuits with dips, cheese, avocado or nut spreads ✓ Yoghurt/dairy desserts ✓ Egg/chicken/cheese sandwich ✓ Milk drinks like <i>Up n Go Energize</i>TM 250mL and <i>Breaka</i>TM 250mL

Side Effects

You may get side effects from treatment that are general (e.g. poor appetite, tiredness).

Or you may get side effects that relate to the area of your body receiving treatment. Some common side effects are below. If you have any of the following, ask to see a dietitian, speech pathologist, nurse, or your doctor:

- Poor Appetite
- Diarrhoea (Loose bowel movements)
- Constipation
- Taste Changes
- Nausea
- Sore mouth or throat
- Pain

If you cannot drink enough fluids, please see a doctor *immediately* to avoid becoming dehydrated.

Key Takeaways

- Aim for 6 smaller meals per day to maintain your weight with the help of a dietitian.
- Choose meals, snacks and drinks which will give you enough strength and energy.
- If the side effects mentioned occur, let your team know.

For further information, contact your dietitian or nutritionist _____