

Nutrition for Breast Cancer Survivors

Good nutrition is important during and after treatment for breast cancer. Managing your weight, staying active, and limiting your alcohol intake can help decrease the risk of your cancer returning.

Reaching and Maintaining a Healthy Weight

It is important to not gain excess weight after a breast cancer diagnosis. Weight gain following breast cancer treatment may increase production of estrogen, which can increase the risk for breast cancer recurrence. Check with your health care provider to decide on a healthy weight for you.

How Can I Lose Weight Safely?

If you need to lose weight, do so gradually (aim for no more than 1 to 2 pounds of weight loss per week). Key strategies that help with weight loss (and weight maintenance) include:

- Keeping active
- Watching your portion sizes
- Limiting the calories and fat that you eat

Tips for Healthy-Weight Diet

- Choose a variety of foods from all food groups to ensure that you get enough vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients.
- Choose fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Choose lean meats and nonfat or low-fat dairy foods.
- Avoid fried foods and foods cooked in fats (such as butter, lard, margarine, shortening, or cooking oil).
- Use low-fat or fat-free condiments, dressings, and sauces.
- Read food labels and use a fat-gram/calorie counter to track the fat and calories that you are eating.

Why Should I Make Lower Fat Choices?

Limiting the fat in your diet will cut calories. In addition, cutting back on saturated fat and *trans* fats can lower your risk of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The following menu is one example of a lower fat meal plan that offers a variety of foods from all food groups. Talk with your registered dietitian (RD) to create a meal plan that is balanced and right for you.

Sample Lower Calorie, Lower Fat Menu (1,500 Calories and About 35 Grams of Fat)

Breakfast

1/2 cup orange juice (1 serving fruit)

1 slice whole wheat toast with 1 teaspoon light margarine (1 serving whole grains; 1 serving fat)

1/2 cup high-fiber whole grain cereal with 1 cup fat-free (skim) milk (1 serving whole grains; 1 serving milk)

Lunch

Sandwich made with 2 slices whole wheat bread, 2 ounces lean turkey, 1 tablespoon light mayonnaise, and lettuce (2 servings whole grains; 2 ounces lean meat; 1 serving fat; 1 serving vegetables)

Carrots, celery, and cherry tomatoes (1 serving vegetables)

Small apple (1 serving fruit)

Dinner

2 ounces lean beef (2 ounces lean meat)

1 whole wheat dinner roll with 1 teaspoon light margarine (1 serving whole grains; 1 serving fat)

1/2 cup green beans, 1/2 cup carrots, and 1/2 cup mashed potatoes made with skins (3 servings vegetables)

1/2 cup peaches (1 serving fruit)

Snacks

3 cups low-fat popcorn (1 serving whole grains)

1 cup fat-free milk (1 serving milk)

Staying Physically Active

Regular exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight and may help prevent cancer recurrence. Mild exercise can also help prevent fatigue. **Aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week, and try to be active most days of the week.**

If you have not been physically active in the past, talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program. Start slowly and increase activity as tolerated. Check with your cancer center for a referral to a local gym or trainer with experience in cancer survivor issues.

Avoiding or Limiting Alcohol

Cancer recurrence rates are higher for women who have more than one alcoholic drink per day. Therefore, it is prudent to avoid alcohol or limit the amount you drink. One drink is equal to a 12-ounce beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1½ ounces of liquor.

Managing Menopause-Like Symptoms

Treatment for breast cancer may cause symptoms similar to those that occur in menopause, such as weight gain, fatigue, hot flashes, and night sweats. By making the following simple lifestyle changes, you can help manage these symptoms:

- Follow the weight management recommendations provided in this handout.
- Prevent fatigue by eating small meals every 4 to 5 hours throughout the day and by choosing foods that are low in fat.
- Mild to moderate physical activity can help you feel more energetic.
- Help manage hot flashes and night sweats by avoiding hot beverages, spicy foods, and alcoholic beverages.
- Dressing in layers of clothing that can be removed if you get too hot, turning on a fan, and sipping ice water may also help manage hot flashes.
- Talk to your doctor before trying any herbal remedies for hot flashes.