

Eating well during your treatment

Information for patients



Leeds Cancer
Centre

This booklet gives information and advice about how to cope with some common eating problems. You may have these problems because of cancer or the effects of cancer treatment.

It is a guide to help you stay as well nourished as possible during your illness or treatment.

If you are well nourished, you will:

- Feel stronger.
- Be able to fight infection.
- Cope better with treatment.

Being well nourished can also help with wound healing.

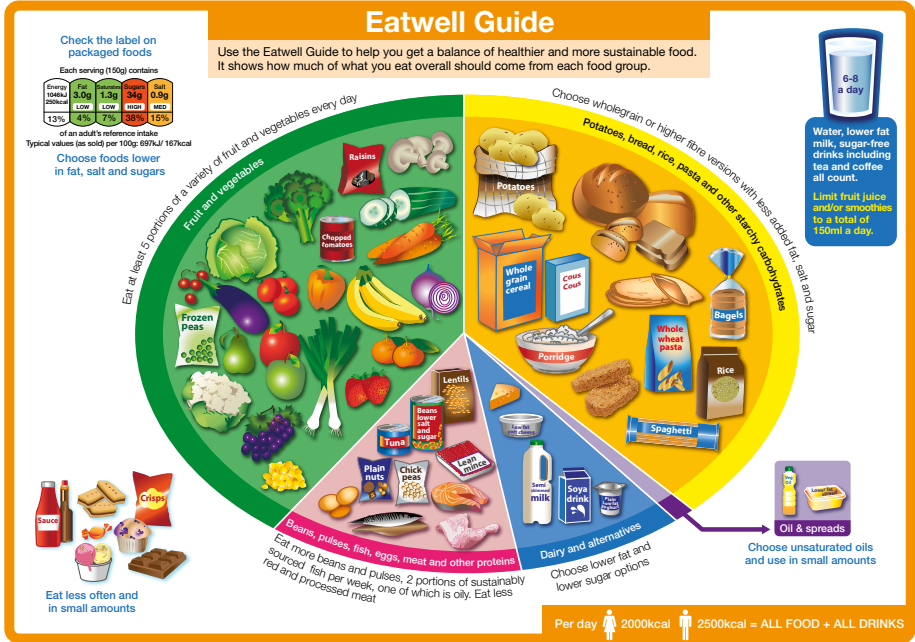
Weight loss can be a common problem during illness or treatment. This booklet includes advice on how to add extra energy and protein to your diet to help maintain or increase your weight and information about manufactured food supplements.

Achieving a balanced diet

Everyone needs a balanced diet for health. To achieve this it is important that you try to include foods from the main food groups shown on the next page.

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Use the eatwell guide below to help you get the balance right. It shows you how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Common eating problems

Poor appetite

- Try taking small, frequent meals and snacks.
- Try to have something nourishing every few hours.
- Try smaller portions or use a smaller plate so you don't over face yourself.
- Cold foods may be easier to eat e.g. cold meats, cold potato, pasta or tuna salads, mini quiche, mini pork pie or sausage rolls.

- Softer food can often be less effort to eat e.g. scrambled egg, shepherd's pie, dhal.
- If you are tired you may enjoy food prepared by someone else or try ready meals, frozen meals or tinned foods.
- Make the most of the times when you feel better by trying to eat more.
- Relax before meals and take your time eating.
- A small amount of alcohol (if permitted) or some fresh air before a meal may help stimulate your appetite.
- Drinking fluids with meals may fill you up - try having a drink after your meal instead.
- Smoking can affect your appetite and taste; stopping may help to improve them.

Taste changes

- Avoid foods that taste unpleasant.
- Sharp or strong flavoured foods may have more taste e.g. lemon, mint and curry flavours.
- If food tastes metallic, try alternatives to red meat such as chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, cheese, beans, nuts or lentils.
- Try marinating meat in wine, fruit juices, soy or sweet and sour sauces.
- Try drinking milk, fruit juice or fruit/herb teas if tea and coffee taste unpleasant.
- Try plastic or wooden cutlery if food tastes metallic.

Sore mouth and throat

Tell your doctor or clinic nurse as soon as you start to develop any discomfort when chewing or swallowing so they can advise you on suitable pain relief medications, gels or mouthwashes.

- Avoid very hot foods. Warm or cool foods are often more soothing.
- Spicy, salty or sharp/acidic foods may be best avoided e.g. yeast extracts, curries, chillies, oranges, lemons, tomatoes, fresh fruit juices.
- Eat soft, moist foods e.g. mashed potato, cottage pie, lasagne, fish in sauce, lentils, soups with grated cheese, moussaka, scrambled egg, yoghurt, milk puddings.
- Moisten your food by adding extra butter, ghee or margarine, sauces, gravy, cream or evaporated milk.
- Avoid dry or rough foods that may irritate your mouth e.g. toast, dry biscuits.
- You may find it helpful to drink through a straw.
- Use a small, soft tooth brush and mild tooth paste to clean your teeth and mouth gently.

Dry mouth

- Sip drinks often e.g. fruit juice, milky drinks, water, fizzy drinks.
- Try sucking crushed ice or ice cubes. Fruit juice can be made into ice cubes.
- Make meals moist with gravy, sauces, cream, evaporated milk or creamy soups.



- Boiled sweets, mints or chewing gum may help to stimulate your saliva.
- Saliva sprays, gels and lozenges can also help - please ask your clinic nurse or doctor for more information about these.

Weight loss

If you have lost weight or can only manage to eat small amounts, you should try to eat a diet higher in protein and energy. It is still important to try to include some foods from each of the main food groups to keep your diet balanced.

How to add extra energy and protein to your diet

Fats and sugar provide energy and help foods taste good. Protein is important for wound healing and muscle strength. Try some of the ideas below and see what suits you best.

Milk

- Try using full fat whole milk.
- Try adding extra protein and calories by stirring 2-4 tablespoons of dried milk powder into each pint of milk (Use this milk in tea, coffee, milk puddings, milkshakes or cereal).
- Use evaporated milk on fresh or tinned fruit, porridge and cereals.

Butter and Margarine

- Avoid low-fat, diet or low calorie products.
- Spread thickly on bread, toast, teacakes, crumpets or chapattis.

- Add to boiled/mashed potatoes, noodles, vegetables and sauces.
- Use oil, butter or ghee generously in cooking if you can tolerate it.

Cheese

- Add grated cheese to pasta dishes, soups, casseroles, baked beans, tinned spaghetti, scrambled eggs/omelettes, potatoes and vegetables.



- Add extra cheese to sauces.
- Use full fat cheese spread on plain biscuits or crackers.
- Put extra cheese with sandwiches.

Cream or Crème Fraiche

Add cream or crème fraiche to cereal, porridge, soup, casseroles, curries, sauces, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, puddings, and tinned, stewed or fresh fruit.

Sugar

- Try not to use any low sugar or diet products.
- If you enjoy sweet things add sugar in generous amounts to cereals and drinks.
- If increasing your sugar intake make sure you brush your teeth regularly to prevent problems with your teeth.
- If you have diabetes please seek advice from your Doctor or Dietitian before increasing your sugar intake.

Snacks or nibbles

When you have a poor appetite, feel tired or sick, try to eat smaller meals with regular snacks in between.

Here are some snack ideas to try:

- Milky drinks e.g. hot chocolate, malted drink, milky coffee, milkshake
- Full fat Yoghurt (thick & creamy)
- Full fat fromage frais
- Milk puddings
- Mousse
- Trifle
- Custard
- Ice-cream
- Crème caramel
- Manufactured food supplements (prescribed or non-prescribed) - further advice is given later in this booklet.
- Crackers & butter
- Crisps / nuts
- Cheese cubes
- Chips
- Sweets / chocolate
- Cakes
- Biscuits
- Toasted teacake
- Scone with butter & jam
- Ice cream

Meal and snack Ideas

Breakfast

- Pure fruit juice, fruit smoothie.
- Porridge made with full fat milk and added milk powder.
- Cereal with full fat milk and sugar.
- Scrambled eggs - add cream, grated cheese.
- Cooked breakfast.
- Toast, crumpets or croissants - add plenty of butter and jam, honey or marmalade.

Mid morning

- Tea/coffee or milk drink with biscuits or cake.
- Cheese with crackers or toast.

Main meal

- Meat/chicken/fish/eggs/cheese/beans/dhal - try fried food or add a creamy sauce.
- Potatoes/rice/pasta/bread/noodles - add butter or cream to potatoes, cheese to pasta.
- Vegetables with added butter or salad with salad cream or mayonnaise.
- Soup - add cream, milk powder, beans or grated cheese.

Snack meal

- Scrambled, boiled or poached eggs with toast.
- Cheese on toast or with crackers.
- Fish fingers with oven chips or baked beans.
- Sandwich with meat, fish, egg, cheese, hummus, salad - add mayonnaise or salad cream.
- Soup - add cream, milk powder or grated cheese.

Desserts

- Rice pudding, semolina (add extra cream).
- Sponge or crumble and custard.
- Fruit and cream or ice-cream.
- Full fat yoghurt.
- Trifle, crème caramel.
- Cake or chocolate biscuit.



Manufactured food supplements

If you continue to have a small appetite and weight loss you may need to include some food supplements in your diet. Food supplement drinks, that are available on prescription from your doctor include Fortisip, Fresubin Energy and Ensure Plus. Non-prescribable food supplements are available from most chemists and large supermarkets. Some of these are:

Complan: Sweet flavours include Strawberry, Chocolate, Vanilla, Banana. Savoury flavours include Chicken, and Original.

Meritene: Sweet flavours include Strawberry, Vanilla and Chocolate. Savoury flavours include Chicken and Vegetable.

Nutrament: Sweet flavours include chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, banana.

The information in this leaflet provides general guidance and ideas only. If you require additional information or help please ask your nurse or doctor. For some patients a referral to the Dietitian may be required.

Patients having chemotherapy may need to follow '**Safer Eating Advice**'. Your nurse will advise you of this.

Please note some of the advice in this booklet may not be suitable for people with diabetes.

Local Support Services

Leeds Cancer Support

Leeds Cancer Support complements care provided by your clinical team. We offer access to information and a wide range of support, in a welcoming environment for you, your family and friends.

We can be found in the information lounges in Bexley Wing and also in the purpose built Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre.

The Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre

The Centre is on the St James's Hospital site and offers a variety of support services including complementary and supportive therapies. These therapies include Reiki, relaxation and visualisation, hand and foot massage and many others. We also offer a weekly exercise class and a monthly support group. You can just drop in for a coffee and a chat anytime.

Contact numbers for Leeds Cancer Support

Information Lounge Level -2 Radiotherapy Department

Open from 8.00am - 6.00pm Tel: **(0113) 206 7603**

Information Centre Level 1 Outpatients Department

Open from 9.00am - 4.00pm. Tel: **(0113) 206 8816**

Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre

Open from 10.00am - 4.00pm. Tel: **(0113) 206 6498**

All the above services can be emailed on:

leedsth-tr.cancersupport@nhs.net

Maggie's Centre

If you or someone you love has cancer you may have lots of questions. Maggie's is a warm, welcoming place where you can meet people who are experiencing similar things to you.

You may also be able to find support groups specific to your needs and get advice and information from their professional staff.

You don't need an appointment and all support is free.

Open Monday to Friday 9.00 am - 5.00pm. Tel: **(0113) 427 8364**

Address: St James's Hospital (next to the multi storey car park), Alma Street, Leeds LS9 7BE

Email: leeds@maggiescentres.org

Website: maggiescentres.org

National Support Organisations

Macmillan Cancer Support

Freephone: **0808 808 0000**, 8.00am to 8.00pm seven days a week.

A textphone service for deaf and hard of hearing people is also available. Textphone: **18001 0808 808 0000**

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Stopping smoking

NHS Free Smoking Helpline: 0300 123 1044 Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 5pm.

Website: www.gosmokefree.nhs.uk







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© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 8th edition (Ver 1)
Developed by: The Oncology Dietetic Department
Produced by: Medical Illustration Services • MID code: 20220720_009/EP

LN000031
Publication date
08/2023
Review date
08/2026