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Prepared By:		Contact:	

Oncology: Cooking Tips

During cancer treatment, nutrition is very important. Making sure you get enough calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals is important in controlling symptoms of cancer and its treatment. The following tips will help you make sure you get the nutrients you need.

- Try small, frequent meals instead of 2 or 3 large meals.
- Keep ready-to-serve and easy-to-prepare foods available to take advantage of times when you may feel like eating. Examples include ready-to-serve puddings, peanut butter, tuna, cereal bars, trail mix, cheese and crackers, and eggs.
- Let family and friends help with meal preparation.
- Keep meal preparation simple by using prepared and frozen foods.
- Keep liquid supplements refrigerated so they are ready to drink.
- If you have lost weight and/or are trying to prevent further weight loss, increase the calorie content of what you are eating by:
 - Using milk instead of water for soups and cooked cereals.
 - Adding butter, salad dressing, and oils to vegetables.
 - Adding extra protein to soups by slicing cooked egg white into the soup.
- If the smell of food makes you nauseous, stay out of the room where food is being prepared.
- Take only small portions on the plate and go back for second helpings.
- Pain medication should be taken approximately one half-hour before mealtime to minimize interference with food intake.

Notes

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Head and Neck Cancer Nutrition Therapy

Achieving adequate nutritional status in people with cancer means getting enough calories and protein to prevent weight loss, regain strength, and rebuild healthy tissues. Important nutrients are highlighted below.

Protein

- Helps repair body tissue and maintain a healthy immune system.
- Cancer patients usually need additional protein, especially following surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy.
- Good sources of protein include lean meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, nuts, beans, and soy.

Carbohydrate and Fat

- Help supply the body with the bulk of calories it needs.
- Good sources of carbohydrate include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, pasta, cereals, beans, and peas.
- Good sources of fat include olive oil, nuts, and seeds.

Vitamins and Minerals

- Help ensure proper growth and development.
- Allow the body to use the energy in foods.
- A well-balanced diet with enough protein and calories usually contains plenty of vitamins and minerals. Eat variety!

Nutritional Considerations

Head and neck cancers can change eating ability and nutrition status from the side effects of surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. See below for nutritional considerations, and practice good oral hygiene.

Clinical Feature	Nutritional Considerations
Dry mouth (xerostomia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase fluids • Minimize amount/frequency of cariogenic foods • Modify food consistency (moist, soft foods) • Limit spicy or hot foods • Suck on sugar-free mints/candies • Cut foods into small pieces and mix with sauces and gravies moisten
Sore mouth and throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase fluids • Modify food consistency (moist, soft foods that won't scratch mouth or throat) • Avoid citrus, spicy, and seasoned foods (especially salty foods) • Choose lukewarm or cool foods and avoid very hot or cold foods • Use sauces and gravies to blend or moisten foods that are dry or solid
Taste changes (dysgeusia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plastic utensils if metallic taste present • Season foods with tart flavors such as citrus fruits • Flavor foods with onion, garlic, barbecue sauce, and other seasonings • Add sugar to improve the flavor of salty foods • Add salt to decrease the sweetness of sugary foods • Serve foods cold or at room temperature
Difficulty chewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify diet consistency as tolerated • Try soft or pureed foods • Moisten dry items such as meat, cereal, or crackers
Nausea and vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat 6 small meals per day • Eat dry foods (crackers, toast) • Avoid foods with strong odor • Avoid foods that are overly sweet, greasy, fried, or spicy • Eat cool foods instead of hot, spicy foods • Sip clear liquids frequently to prevent dehydration • Suck on sugar-free mints/candies
Poor appetite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat small meals or snacks every 1-2 hours • Avoid liquids with meals • Keep high-calorie, high-protein snacks on hand