

How to Manage Symptoms from Cancer Treatments

Symptoms from cancer treatments may make it hard to eat. These tips will help you manage your symptoms and maintain a healthy diet.

Sore Mouth or Throat

- Choose bland, soft, moist foods at room temperature.
- Citrus fruits/juices, tomato products, spicy/salty foods, and rough/dry foods may cause pain.
- Ask your health care team about mouthwash and medicine they can prescribe that ease pain.

Dry Mouth

- Take sips of fluid throughout the day.
- Moisten foods with broth, soup, sauce, gravy, butter or margarine.
- Suck on ice chips, frozen pieces of fruit, Italian ice, and popsicles.
- Gum or sucking on candy (no sugar) may help.
- Try dry mouth products by Biotene[®], OraMoist[®], Orajel[®], MedActive[®], Act[®], and MighTeaFlow[®].

Altered Taste

- Try tart flavors like lemonade or citrus fruits. You can also try pickled foods like pickles, coleslaw, and olives.
- Add extra flavor to foods. Try spices or herbs, mustard, ketchup, lemon/lime juice, sauces or dressings.
- If red meat tastes strange, try other proteins like chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, or tofu.
- Marinate or cook meats in sweet juices, acidic dressings or marinades.

Nausea

- Have crackers, toast, or dry cereal in the morning to help settle your stomach.
- Instead of large meals, eat small portions 1-3 hours apart.
- Avoid foods that are fatty, greasy or spicy.
- Select bland, mild foods.

Diarrhea

- Take frequent sips of clear fluids.
- Choose bland, mild foods.
- Avoid foods that are fatty, greasy.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- If you think you are intolerant to dairy, avoid or limit dairy products like milk and ice cream. Try Lactaid[®] milk, soymilk, almond milk, yogurt, and mozzarella cheese sticks.

Foods Lists

The foods below make good snacks or can be combined to make small meals.

Bland Foods

Grains

Bread/toast, bagels (plain), English muffin, cornbread, pancakes, waffles, pasta, couscous, rice cakes (plain), tortillas, rice, crackers, cereals (Rice Krispies[®], corn flakes, Crispex[®], Cheerios), pretzels, cream of rice[®], Cream of Wheat[®], grits, oatmeal

Proteins

Fish (no breading), beef (lean cuts), chicken or turkey (without skin, roasted, baked, grilled, well-cooked), eggs (scrambled, soft or hard boiled, poached), tofu (cooked), lunch meats (ham/turkey/chicken), soups (broth based), peanut butter (creamy)

Vegetables

Well cooked vegetables like carrots, green beans, squash, zucchini, sweet potatoes, potatoes (baked, boiled, or mashed without skin)

Fruits

Bananas, watermelon, honeydew, cantaloupe, canned or fresh peaches/pears, apples (peeled) applesauce, mandarin oranges

Dairy

Milk (skim or 1%, almond/soy/rice milk), yogurt, cottage cheese (2% or less), mozzarella and cheddar cheese

Desserts

Plain cookies or cakes (angel food cake, sponge cake, vanilla wafers), flavored gelatin, popsicle, sherbet, sorbet, frozen yogurt, low fat ice cream, low fat pudding

Drinks

Clear sodas (choose caffeine-free if able), sport drinks, decaf teas, apple juice, cranberry juice, rice milk, almond milk, soymilk, Lactaid[®] milk, ginger ale, ginger or chamomile tea, fruit punch

Moist/Soft Foods**Grains**

French Toast with syrup, cooked cereals, cold cereals in milk, pasta or rice in sauce

Proteins

Ground meats, poultry, fish (no breading), canned tuna, egg salad, quiche, omelet, soft boiled egg, poached egg, scrambled eggs, tofu, macaroni and cheese, cheese cubes, grated cheese, cheese sauce, creamy peanut butter, hummus, soups (creamy, broth, pureed soups)

Fruits or Vegetables

Soft cooked or pureed fruits, soft cooked veggies, cream or pureed soups, mashed potatoes, applesauce, ripe bananas, watermelon, grapes, frozen fruits

Dairy

Milkshakes, cottage cheese, yogurt/Greek yogurt, frozen yogurt, cheese (sticks or slices), chocolate milk, powdered milk, smoothies, hot cocoa made with milk

Desserts

Flavored gelatin, sherbet, fruit ices, ice pops, pudding, pudding pop, ice cream, cheesecake, mousse

Who to Call

If you have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone number listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#226.