

# Cancer, Nutrition, and You: Where to Start?

## Feeding your body what it needs during cancer treatment is very important.

It is difficult to tell how your body will react to breast cancer treatments. You may be able to eat normally throughout your treatment or you may experience side effects such as nausea, vomiting, mouth sores, taste distortions, and changes in bowel habits.

Many women experience changes in weight. Going through a stressful time can affect your appetite, causing you to eat more or less than usual. Early menopause, changes in metabolism, and fluid retention are other common side effects that may cause weight gain.

Adjusting eating patterns, hydration, and physical activity can help minimize many of these side effects.



Start with getting enough calories, protein, and hydration.

- Pace meals throughout the day to help your body get enough nutrients and calories to maintain your strength, support your immune system, and help manage side effects.
- Incorporate a variety of foods as best you can
  - Include protein in most meals and snacks to help your body repair cells and tissues: beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, yogurt, cheese, eggs, fish, poultry and other lean meat.
  - Portion carbohydrates and fiber to keep your energy levels up: whole grain cereal and bread, oatmeal, quinoa, barley, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and many other plant foods.
  - Choose healthy fats like nut and seed butters, olive oil, and avocado
  - Add color. Fruits and vegetables offer antioxidants and they come in many forms: fresh, frozen, canned, dried. Your body prefers getting these antioxidants and nutrients from food. Talk to your doctor or dietitian if you have questions about supplements.
- Drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration and stay ahead of side effects like nausea and constipation. Aim for about 64 oz water, Broth, tea, diluted juices and electrolyte drinks are other ideas when water isn't appealing.



Virginia Cancer  
Specialists

## Eating and Cancer: Top Tips

1. Follow these recommendations following a cancer diagnosis, if you are not having symptoms that are affecting your eating and digestion
2. Be a healthy weight
3. Be physically active
4. Eat a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans
5. Limit intake of “fast foods” and other processed foods high in fat, starches, or added sugar
6. Limit intake of red and processed meat
7. Limit intake of sugar-sweetened drinks
8. Limit alcohol consumption
9. Do not use supplements for cancer prevention

Much information exists in books and on the Internet. It is very easy to find scary, and oftentimes inaccurate, information online. Common areas for misinformation include the relationship between sugar and cancer, alkaline/acidic foods, and use of various dietary supplements.

Our goal at Virginia Cancer Specialists (VCS) is to help you find ways to get the nutrition your body needs in a way that works with your medical history, preferences, and lifestyle. By offering Nutrition Services at VCS, we provide:

- Individualized nutrition recommendations;
- Support in maintaining or gaining weight during treatment or addressing weight gain related to treatment;
- Help managing cancer and treatment symptoms that affect your ability to eat well;
- Up-to-date information on nutrition in cancer survivorship.



Giuliana Klesius



Shelley Maniscalco

### Virginia Cancer Specialists Nutrition Team

Giuliana Klesius, and Shelley Maniscalco  
Registered Dietitians

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**Need more specific, tailored information?  
Call today to schedule an appointment to  
see one of our dietitians:**

Patients are seen in Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, Gainesville, Loudoun, and Woodbridge. Appointments can be made by calling 703-208-3155.

**Ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurse if you should schedule a consult with a Virginia Cancer Specialists dietitian.**



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