

Diet and nutrition

Food has nutrients that our bodies need. A healthy, balanced diet gives you all the nutrients you need to keep your body working well.

The main groups of nutrients are carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals, fats, fibre and fluids.

Many people find making the decision to follow a healthy, balanced diet helps give them back a sense of control. It can also help you feel that you are doing the best for your health. Eating well and being a healthy weight will help you keep up your strength, increase your energy levels and improve your sense of wellbeing. It can also help reduce the risk of new cancers and other diseases such as heart disease, diabetes or having a stroke.

After cancer treatment, some people have a higher risk of other health problems, including diabetes, heart disease and bone thinning (osteoporosis). A healthy, balanced diet can help to reduce the risk of these.

Tips for a healthy balanced diet

It may not be easy to make changes to your diet. It can be even more challenging when you are coping with cancer and cancer treatment. Before making changes to your diet, talk to a dietitian, your GP or a specialist nurse. A dietitian can help you make changes. They can also advise you about any other dietary problems you might have during or after your cancer treatment.

- Make changes to your diet gradually, at a budget you can afford and when you feel ready.
- Write down what you normally eat for a few weeks. Compare this with information on healthy eating. Then set yourself some small, realistic goals and decide how you will achieve them.
- Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables day.
- Have plenty of carbohydrates, such as wholemeal bread, rice, pasta and potatoes.
- Eat some protein-rich foods, such as meat, poultry, fish, nuts, eggs and pulses (beans and lentils).
- Include milk and dairy foods, such as cheese and yoghurt.
- Try to eat only a small amount of food high in fat, salt and sugar. Some food labels show whether the amount of fats, sugars and salt are high (red), medium (amber) or low (green).
- Try to reduce the amount of processed and red meats and other high-calorie foods you eat, such as takeaway foods. These contain a high amount of salt.
- Choose foods that contain unsaturated fats, such as nuts and oily fish. Limit the amount of saturated fats, which are found in pies, cake, biscuits and cheese.
- For a snack, have something healthy like dried fruit or nuts.
- Drink mainly water, or tea and coffee without sugar. If you drink fizzy drinks or squashes, try to have the sugar-free types. Try to limit the amount of fruit juice you drink as well.
- If you drink alcohol, limit the amount you drink. Government guidelines recommend that both men and women drink a maximum of 14 units of alcohol per week.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Dietetic Association Diabetes UK CORE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.bda.uk.com Tel 0800 048 1714 www.diabetes.org.uk Tel 0345 123 2399 (England) 0141 212 8710 (Scotland) 0289 066 6646 (Northern Ireland) 0345 123 2399 (Wales) www.corecharity.org.uk Tel 0207 486 0341

Further information

[macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/maintaining-a-healthy-lifestyle/healthy-eating](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/maintaining-a-healthy-lifestyle/healthy-eating)

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on [be.macmillan.org.uk](https://www.be.macmillan.org.uk)

- **Heathy eating and cancer**
- **Managing weight gain after cancer treatment**
- **Recipes for people affected by cancer**
- **Heart health and cancer treatment**

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.