

PRIMARY CARE 10 TOP TIPS

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A collaboration between the BDA specialist oncology group and Macmillan GP community.

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Nutrition for each stage of the cancer pathway: During cancer treatment

1 Understand and acknowledge the potentially differing expectations of patients, family and carers with regards to nutrition, which can have physical, social, cultural and emotional implications.

2 Aim to maintain a healthy weight (BMI 20-25kg/m²) or reduce the risk of further weight loss by means of weight stabilisation.

3 Consider the impact of disease and side effects of treatment on nutritional status.

4 Consider and treat symptoms that have an impact on nutritional status for example gastrointestinal disturbances, nausea, pain, mucositis/oral thrush and anxiety.

5 Consider the need to review dietetic advice for pre-existing conditions for example diabetes or high cholesterol. Seek specialist advice if appropriate.

6 If patient is maintaining weight encourage a balanced and varied diet¹.

7 If patient is losing weight, is already underweight or has poor appetite give first line dietary advice on food fortification²:

- a. Swap traditional cooked meals if not tolerated for protein rich snack options.
- b. Encourage small frequent meals and snacks in manageable amounts.
- c. Fortify normal foods with high calorie options.
- d. Offer nourishing/milky drinks between meals.

8 If patient has a sore mouth or difficulty chewing or swallowing give first line texture modification advice³:

- a. Encourage soft moist foods that are easier to chew and swallow.
- b. Add extra sauces/gravy to meals.
- c. Encourage nourishing drinks between meals.
- d. Avoid foods that require lots of chewing. Consider liquidising foods.
- e. Avoid foods that irritate the mouth such as highly spiced or acidic foods.

9 Patients on a balanced and varied diet do not require additional vitamin or mineral supplements. They should be discouraged during chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment.

10 If the patient is unable to meet their nutritional requirements or continues to lose weight consider prescribing oral nutritional supplements and refer to a specialist dietitian. (Check with your pharmacy lead for local policy on the availability of starter/taster packs for oral nutritional supplements)

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¹ Give *Healthy Eating and Cancer* booklet to patient

² Give *The Building Up Diet* booklet to patient

³ Give *Eating problems and cancer* booklet to patient