

Diet and nutrition

This information is about diet and eating well. Having a healthy, balanced diet is one of the best choices you can make for your overall health. This includes thinking about what you drink, and how much. 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.

Following a healthy, balanced diet is good for your well-being. Eating well and keeping to a healthy weight will help you:

- feel stronger
- increase your energy levels
- keep your immune system healthy
- improve your sense of well-being.

It can also help reduce the risk of new cancers and other diseases such as, heart disease, diabetes and stroke. After cancer treatment, some people have a higher risk of other health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, stroke and bone thinning (osteoporosis).

Your cancer treatment team will tell you if you are at higher risk of other health problems. If you are, it is important to follow a healthy diet to help prevent them.

Tips for healthy eating

- Healthy eating does not need to be expensive. You can still eat well on a small budget. The British Dietetic Association has [recipes](#) and more information.
- Try to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Eat plenty of carbohydrates, such as wholemeal bread, rice, pasta, noodles, couscous and potatoes.
- Eat some protein-rich foods, such as lean meat, poultry, fish, nuts, eggs and beans and lentils, tofu or soya products. Aim to have 2 to 3 servings of protein each day.
- Include some milk and dairy foods, such as cheese and yoghurt or dairy alternatives. Aim to have 2 to 3 portions per day. Include a very small amount of oils and spreads.
- Try to limit foods high in fat, salt and sugar. For a snack, swap cakes or crisps for dried fruit and nuts.
- Limit the amount of saturated fats you eat. Saturated fats are found in cheese, butter, meat products such as burgers and sausages, biscuits, pastries and cakes.
- Choose foods that contain unsaturated fats, such as olive and rapeseed oils and spreads, avocados, almond and Brazil nuts and oily fish.
- Try to reduce the amount of processed and red meat you eat. Processed meat includes sausages, bacon and tinned meats. Limit red meat to 1 or 2 portions per week. Try to eat more fish, skinned chicken or turkey, beans and lentils instead.
- Many food manufacturers and supermarkets use a food traffic-light system on their labels. This tells you the amount of fats, saturated fats, sugars and salt in 100g (3½ oz) of the product. You should eat more foods with green and amber labels and fewer with red.
- Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day. Drink water, milk or reduced-sugar drinks, unsweetened squashes that contain no added sugar, and tea and coffee without sugar.
- If you drink alcohol, try to follow the recommended drinking guidelines. [Drinkaware](#) has more information.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on orders.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- MAC13612 [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- MAC12167 [Managing weight gain after cancer treatment](#)
- MAC13614 [The building-up diet](#)
- MAC16337 [Eat a healthy diet](#) – Easy read

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line on **0808 808 00 00**.

Further Macmillan 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 to [chat online](#) to one of our team.

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

If you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#). Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls or visits with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

Other useful contact details

- British Dietetic Association (BDA) – visit www.bda.uk.com
- World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) – www.wcrf-uk.org/healthy-eating/recipes
- British Heart Foundation – www.bhf.org.uk
- Diabetes UK – visit www.diabetes.org.uk or call **0345 123 2399**
- Guts UK – visit www.gutscharity.org.uk
- Drinkaware – visit www.drinkaware.co.uk

Notes and questions
