

Changes in weight

Some cancer treatments, side effects or even lifestyle changes can cause you to [gain or lose weight](#).

You may have lost weight due to cancer, or the side effects of treatment. You may [not feel hungry](#), or feel full soon after starting eating. Some people may [feel sick](#), or find that foods taste different. Some types of cancer make your body use up more energy, even if you are not very active. You may lose weight even if you are eating well.

Some people may [gain weight](#) instead. A cancer diagnosis and cancer treatment can make it hard to have a [healthy lifestyle](#). You may feel too tired to be active. Some people eat more if they are stressed, sad or worried. Some drugs can cause weight gain or increase your appetite.

Talk to your specialist doctor, nurse or GP. They can refer you to a dietitian. A dietitian can give you advice about which foods are best for you.

Tips for managing weight loss

- You can add [extra energy and protein](#) to your diet without having to eat more. For example, fortify milk by adding 2 to 4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to 570ml (a pint) of full-fat milk and mixing it together. Or you can fortify plant-based milks, such as oat or coconut milk, by mixing in ground nuts or powdered peanut butter. Keep the milk in the fridge to use in drinks, on cereals and for cooking.
- When you are [shopping](#), choose full-fat foods instead of 'diet' or 'light' foods.
- Add extra butter, margarine or oil to bread, potatoes, pasta and cooked vegetables. Add extra cheese to sauces and extra paneer to curries.
- Add cream, sour cream, plain yoghurt, mascarpone or crème fraiche to sauces, soups and meat dishes. Plant-based alternatives can be used too.
- Add whole or blended beans, lentils or peas to soups, curries and stews.
- Add evaporated milk, condensed milk, cream or soya cream to desserts and hot drinks.
- Have cream, custard or ice-cream with desserts.
- Talk to your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or a dietitian if you are still struggling. They may encourage you to eat everyday foods that are high in energy and protein. They may also recommend or prescribe food (nutritional) [supplements](#), such as milkshakes or juices.

Tips for managing weight gain

- It is not always easy to [make changes](#) to your lifestyle. If you eat a [healthy diet](#) and are [physically active](#), you will lose weight gradually. This means you are more likely to reach and stay a healthy weight.
- Try to [plan](#) what you are going to eat for the week. This means you will be less likely to buy unhealthy food at the last minute.
- Try to eat more fruit and vegetables, and less fat and sugar.
- Start the day with a healthy breakfast. This will help you cut out snacks and feel less hungry at lunchtime.
- Use a smaller dinner plate. Bigger plates need more food to fill them.
- Choose a healthy starter, such as low-fat soup, melon or salad.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids. Sometimes we mistake being thirsty for being hungry. Try to have a glass of water before meals.
- Eat slowly and avoid second helpings. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that you are full. Try to wait a while before deciding whether you want more.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

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

- [Eating problems and cancer](#)
- [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- [Managing weight gain after cancer treatment](#)
- [Stay healthy – eat a healthy diet – easy read](#)
- [The building-up diet](#)

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

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 where you can [chat online](#) to one of our team.

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.

Or 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

- World Cancer Research Fund – Healthy recipes – visit www.wcrf-uk.org/healthy-eating/recipes
- NHS – Eat well – visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well

Notes and questions
