

Understanding

Diet and Cancer

A guide for patients with cancer

Diet and Cancer

This booklet has been written to help you understand more about diet and cancer. It has been prepared and checked by dietitians, nurses and patients. The information in this booklet is an agreed view on diet and cancer.

If you are a patient, your doctor, dietitian or nurse may like to go through the booklet with you. They can mark sections that are important for you. You can also make a note below of the contact names and information you may need quickly.



Dietitian Tel:

Specialist nurse Tel:

Family doctor (GP) Tel:

Surgeon Tel:

Medical oncologist Tel:

Radiation oncologist Tel:

Radiation therapist Tel:

Emergency number Tel:

Treatments Review dates

If you like, you can also add:

Your name

Address



The Irish Cancer Society is the national charity for cancer care, dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem and to improving the lives of those living with cancer. This booklet has been produced by Nursing Services of the Irish Cancer Society to meet the need for improved communication, information and support for cancer patients and their families throughout diagnosis and treatment. We would like to thank all those patients, families and professionals whose support and advice made this publication possible.

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- *Guide to Daily Healthy Food Choices*, Health Service Executive, 2006
- *Recommendations for Cancer Prevention*, World Cancer Research Fund, 2007
- *Preventing Cancer – Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity*, Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute, 2007
- *Eating Hints for Cancer Patients*, National Cancer Institute (US), 2003
- *Integrative Nutritional Therapies for Cancer: A Scientific Guide to Natural Products Used to Treat and Prevent Cancer*, NB Kumar, K Allen & D Riccardi, Facts & Comparisons (US), 2002

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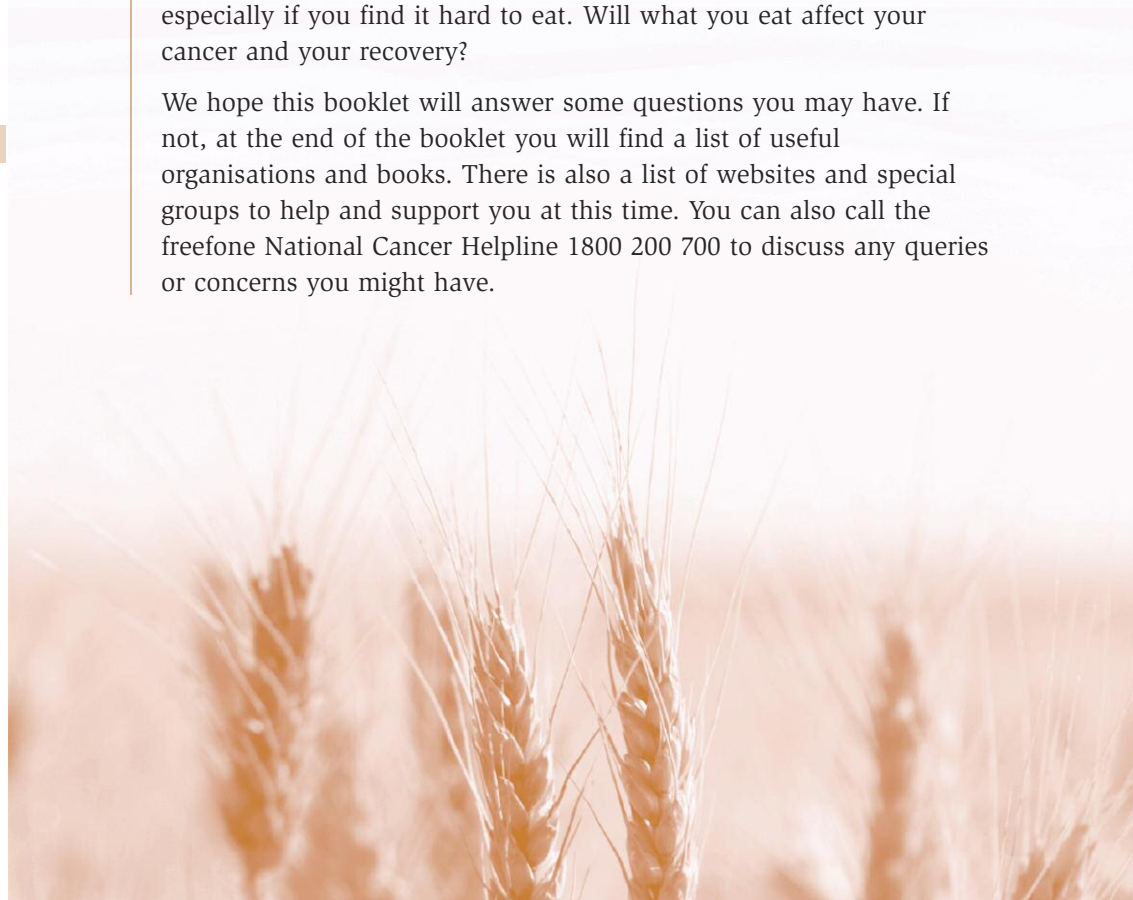
Introduction

Eating well is an important part of staying healthy. Taking in the right kinds of foods can help you feel better and stronger. When you have cancer, eating well becomes even more important. This booklet has been written to help you learn more about diet and cancer. It is aimed at cancer patients who are newly diagnosed, being treated or who have recovered.

You can read about healthy eating, the eating problems to expect from cancer treatment, and how to cope with them. There are also some tips for carers about eating and preparing food. Some advice is given about special diets and supplements as well.

It is common to have questions about what foods to eat during and after treatment. You may wonder what the best diet is for you, especially if you find it hard to eat. Will what you eat affect your cancer and your recovery?

We hope this booklet will answer some questions you may have. If not, at the end of the booklet you will find a list of useful organisations and books. There is also a list of websites and special groups to help and support you at this time. You can also call the freefone National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700 to discuss any queries or concerns you might have.



What does that word mean?

Alternative therapy A way of promoting health and well-being that has a different philosophy and viewpoint from conventional medicine. Here, the therapies are used instead of conventional medicine. For example herbalism, metabolic therapy, megavitamin therapy.

Anorexia Loss of appetite, lack of desire or interest in food.

Antioxidants Chemicals that protect the body from other chemicals called free radicals that cause cell damage. Antioxidants are vitamins, enzymes and minerals. They are found in berries, broccoli, tomatoes, red grapes, garlic, spinach, tea and carrots. Some well-known antioxidants are vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin E. See also free radicals.

Biological therapy A treatment to help the immune system fight disease and infection. It uses proteins from the body to destroy cancer cells. Also called immunotherapy.

Calorie This measures the energy your body gets from food. You need calories so your body has the energy to work, grow and repair itself.

Cachexia When there is severe loss of appetite, weight loss, loss of strength and muscle mass due to cancer and/or its treatment.

Complementary therapy Therapies that can be given with conventional medicine. For example, massage, acupuncture.

Chemotherapy A treatment that uses drugs to cure or control cancer.

Dehydration When the body loses too much water and affects how it works.

Digestive tract The parts of the body involved with eating, digesting, and getting rid of food. This includes the mouth, gullet (oesophagus), stomach and intestines.

Diet The foods you eat and drink. This includes liquids and solids.

Dietitian An expert on food and nutrition. They can give advice on healthy eating and special diets.

Fibre The part of plant foods that the body cannot digest. It helps to move waste out of the bowels quickly.

Fluids Things to drink, like water. Also called liquids.

Free radicals Chemicals that are highly reactive and often contain oxygen or nitrogen. They are formed naturally in the body during chemical reactions. Because they can cause cell damage, they are linked to cancer.

Herbalism A form of alternative medicine that uses plants and simple extracts of plants to heal the whole body.

Hormone therapy A treatment that changes the amount of hormones in your body to cure or prevent cancer coming back.

Malnourished When you do not have enough nutrients for your body to work properly. This can happen if you do not eat a balanced diet. Undereating or overeating can lead to a lack of a balanced diet.

Minerals	Nutrients needed by the body to help it work well. These include iron, calcium, potassium and sodium.
Nutrients	Chemicals that make up foods. These include protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals. They are used by the body to work properly and grow. Essential nutrients are those that the body does not make itself and must get from food eaten.
Nutrition	The taking in and use of food by your body. After food is eaten, the body breaks it down into nutrients, which then travel through the bloodstream to cells in your body to help it grow and work.
Obesity	Having a high amount of body fat. A person is said to obese if they have a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30.
Radiotherapy	A treatment that uses high-energy X-rays to cure or control cancer and other diseases.
Soft diet	Food that is softened by cooking, mashing, blending or puréeing.
Tube feeding	A small tube that is placed in your nose and down into your stomach or directly into your stomach or bowel. It can give you liquid nutrients.
Vitamins	Nutrients which your body needs to grow and stay strong. For example, vitamins A, B, C, D, E, K.

Healthy eating

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating is something we hear about a lot today. Not only can it help your body to grow and work well but also help prevent illness. But sometimes it is hard to know what exactly is a healthy diet.

A healthy diet involves good nutrition. This is when your body takes in essential nutrients in the right amounts. Nutrients are chemicals that make up foods. These include proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. They are used by your body to give you energy, keep you warm and protect you from disease.

If you have cancer, healthy eating is even more important during treatment. It can help you to:

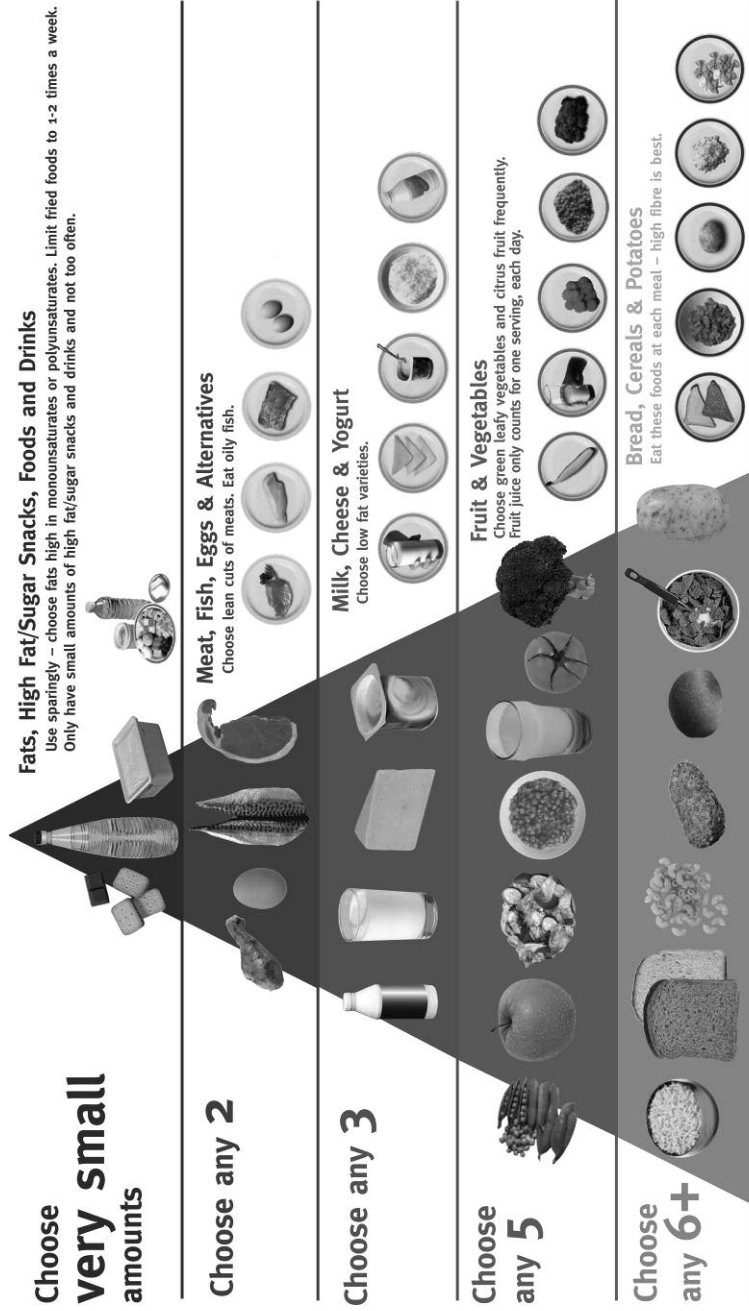
- Feel better
- Keep up your energy and strength
- Keep a healthy weight
- Tolerate the dose of drugs given
- Cope better with side-effects of treatment
- Reduce your risk of infection
- Heal and recover faster

A balanced diet

A balanced diet means taking in all the essential nutrients in the right amounts. That way your body can grow and work well. These nutrients fall into five groups. Some you need in large amounts and others in small amounts. For your diet to be well balanced, you must eat fruit and vegetables. In fact, you should include all the food groups in the food pyramid in the right amounts. See page 10 for more details about the food pyramid.

For some people with cancer, a balanced diet may not be suitable. For example, if you are losing weight. In this case, you may get different advice from your dietitian.

Food pyramid



Group	Food type	Amount to take every day
1	Fats and oils Sugars, confectionery, cakes, biscuits, high-fat snack foods Alcohol	Very little*
2	Meat, fish, eggs, beans, peas, nuts	2 servings*
3	Milk, cheese and yoghurt	3 servings*
4	Fruit and vegetables	5 servings*
5	Bread, cereals and potatoes	6 or more servings*

* This amount may change in special diets.

»»» A balanced diet is when you take in all the essential nutrients in the right amounts so your body can grow, work and repair itself.

»»» **Healthy eating guidelines**

- Eat a variety of food from the different groups.
- Eat the right amount of food to keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Eat more foods rich in starch like bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice.
- Eat less fat, especially saturated fats.
- Choose foods low in fat where possible.
- Oven bake, steam, grill, poach or boil instead of frying.
- If you eat or drink snacks with sugar, limit it to three a day.
- Do not use salt to flavour your food – use other seasonings like pepper, herbs, spices, lemon juice.
- Drink alcohol sensibly and with meals where possible.
- Enjoy your food.

(Adapted from *Guide to Daily Healthy Food Choices*, HSE)

What is a healthy weight?

A healthy weight is when you are a normal weight; you are neither overweight nor underweight. If you are unsure about your weight, ask your dietitian for advice. One way to check it is by finding your body mass index (BMI). BMI measures if your weight is right for your height.

BMI is graded so it can tell if you are underweight, a healthy weight, overweight or obese (fat). If your BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9, you are within a healthy weight range. If it is less than 18.5, you are underweight. If it is more than 25, you are overweight. If more than 30, you are obese.

Your dietitian can measure your BMI for you. Sometimes there are scales in shopping centres or pharmacies that will measure it for you. BMI is a guide only. If you are worried about your score, do talk to your dietitian.

Measuring BMI yourself

You can also calculate your BMI yourself. But first you will need to know your weight in kilograms (kg) and your height in metres (m). Divide your weight by your height and then divide the result again by your height.

Waistline measurement

Measuring your waistline is a way of checking if you are at risk of cancer, especially bowel cancer.

To measure your waistline:

- Find the top of your hipbone.
- At this point, measure around your waist. Make sure the tape measure is snug but not marking your skin.
- Take the measurement at the end of your normal breath.

Your risk of cancer is higher, if your waistline is more than 94 cm or 37 inches for men and more than 80 cm or 32 inches for women. Talk to your dietitian if you are worried about your waistline.

How can I prevent cancer or its recurrence?

A simple guide to preventing cancer or its recurrence is:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Be physically active
- Be a healthy weight

The World Cancer Research Fund believes that at least one third of cancers can be prevented. This can be done by eating the right food, taking regular exercise and avoiding obesity. They suggest 10 ways to do this.



Preventing cancer or its recurrence

- 1 Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- 2 Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- 3 Avoid sugary drinks. Limit processed foods that are high in added sugar or low in fibre or high in fat.
- 4 Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables, wholegrains and pulses (beans, peas).
- 5 Limit the amount of red meat (beef, pork, lamb) you eat. Eat no more than 500g of cooked meat per week. Avoid processed meats (some sausages, black and white pudding, bacon, ham, cornbeef, salami).
- 6 Drink less alcohol. Limit it to 2 drinks for men and 1 drink for women a day. Have a few days free of alcohol each week.
- 7 Eat less salty foods, especially those processed with salt.
- 8 Avoid dietary supplements if you have a balanced diet. Some people may need supplements as advised by their doctor or dietitian.
- 9 Mothers should breastfeed fully for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods.
- 10 Cancer survivors should follow the guidelines for cancer prevention. Also, get advice about your diet from a professional dietitian.



Remember do not chew or smoke tobacco.



To sum up

- Healthy eating during cancer treatment can help you to feel better and recover faster.
- A balanced diet is when you take in all the essential nutrients in the right amounts so your body can grow, work and repair itself.
- For a diet to be well balanced, you must eat fruit and vegetables. You should include all the food groups in the food pyramid in the right amounts.
- A healthy weight is when you are neither overweight nor underweight.
- To help prevent cancer coming back, follow the guidelines for cancer prevention. See page 13.

Nutrition and treatment

What eating problems can I expect from treatment?

Some cancer treatments can affect your appetite or how you eat. Some can affect how you chew, swallow and absorb food. Before any treatment, your doctor and nurse will explain any likely side-effects. Sometimes it can be hard to know what kind of eating problems to expect. It all depends on the:

- location of your cancer and if it has spread
- type of treatment given
- area being treated
- number of treatments
- dose of treatment given
- length of treatment
- symptoms caused by the cancer
- side-effects of treatment
- your own general health.

Surgery

It is common to have some eating problems after surgery. Usually most people can start eating again a day or two after surgery.

If you have surgery to your digestive system, the eating problems may take longer to clear up. This includes surgery to your mouth, tongue, throat, gullet (oesophagus), stomach, small intestine, bowel, rectum, pancreas, liver, and gallbladder.

Some common eating problems include:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Cramping
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Weight gain or loss

Because surgery may slow your digestion or affect your mouth, throat and stomach, you will need good nutrition. Good nutrition will help your wound to heal well and speed up your recovery. In some cases,

you might need tube feeding after your surgery. See page 21 for more details about tube feeding.

Eating tips before surgery

- Your doctor, dietitian and nurse will decide if you need building up. This may be needed if you are malnourished through weight loss or gain.
- Follow the advice of your nurse about clearing your bowels and fasting.

See page 23 for more details about specific eating problems.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy can affect normal cells as well as cancer cells. Normal cells that grow quickly are usually affected. These cells are found in your gut and bowel. So at times you may lose your desire for food or be less able to eat. Eating problems due to chemotherapy can include:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Taste and smell changes | ■ Diarrhoea |
| ■ Loss of appetite | ■ Constipation |
| ■ Sore mouth or throat | ■ Weight gain or loss |
| ■ Nausea and vomiting | |

These problems can vary and depend on the drug, dosage and your own response to it. Usually these problems clear up once treatment ends or soon after.

Eating tips before chemotherapy

- Bring a light meal or snack with you. Some hospitals may offer food and drink to you.
- Eat something before treatment. Most people find a light meal or snack goes down well.

See page 23 for more details about specific eating problems.

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy does not cause eating problems in general. But like chemotherapy, it can affect normal cells as well. Usually the affected

cells are only those in the area of the body being treated. How severe the eating problems are depends on the area being treated and for how long.

Treatment of head and neck may cause:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| ■ Dry mouth | ■ Difficulty swallowing |
| ■ Sore mouth | ■ Taste and smell changes |
| ■ Sore throat | ■ Dental problems |

Treatment of lung, oesophagus or breast may cause:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| ■ Loss of appetite | ■ Indigestion |
| ■ Nausea and vomiting | ■ Increased phlegm (spit) |
| ■ Difficulty swallowing | |

Treatment of stomach or pelvis may cause:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| ■ Loss of appetite | ■ Cramping |
| ■ Nausea and vomiting | ■ Bloating |
| ■ Diarrhoea | |

Fatigue and appetite changes may also affect you during treatment. You may feel too tired to shop, prepare or eat food. After treatment, some of these problems may take longer to clear up.

Eating tips before radiotherapy

- Eat something at least 60 minutes before treatment.
- Bring foods or snacks to eat or drink on the way home.
- Eat small frequent meals with fluids if you are having eating problems.

See page 23 for more details about specific eating problems.

Biological therapy (immunotherapy)

Biological therapies use your immune system to fight cancer cells. Because your immune system is working harder, it can affect your desire or ability to eat.

Common eating problems are:

- Loss of appetite
- Dry mouth
- Sore mouth
- Taste and smell changes
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Weight loss
- Too tired to eat due to fever and aching muscle

Some of these eating problems go away after the first few doses of the drug or once treatment is over. If your blood count is low due to immunotherapy, see page 41 for more about low bacteria diets.

See page 23 for more details about specific eating problems.

Hormone therapy

Some types of hormone therapy can affect your appetite and change how your body deals with fluids:

- Increased appetite
- Excess fluids in the body (fluid retention)

These problems usually go away once treatment is over. See page 23 for more details about specific eating problems.

Are there any foods that can affect treatment?

Some foods might affect chemotherapy or biological therapies. For example, some fruit juices can make some of these drugs work less well. Grapefruit juice and possibly orange and apple juice can reduce the amount of the drug absorbed.

They can also interact with some drugs taken over a few years, especially hormone therapies. These include Tamoxifen and Femara used in breast cancer treatment. These fruit juices can also affect some antibiotics, cyclosporine used after stem or bone marrow transplants, and some drugs used to treat heart disease. Soy is another food that can affect certain drugs like Tamoxifen. Do ask your doctor, nurse or dietitian for advice about fruit juices or soy products. For most people, fruit juices are safe to drink and are a good source of vitamin C.

Herbal products may also affect chemotherapy. See page 45 for more details.



To sum up

- Eating problems can depend on many things like the type of cancer and treatment, and the number and dose of treatments.
- Common eating problems are loss of appetite, dry or sore mouth, taste and smell changes, difficulty swallowing, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation.



Do I need to build myself up before treatment?

During diagnosis, your nurse will talk to you about your eating habits. He or she can discuss any recent weight loss as well. This will include checking your weight and height. You can also talk about any eating problems you have or have had. Or any situations where you find it hard to eat. If you live alone or need someone to prepare food, it can be arranged before you go home.

Increasing calories and protein

If you are underweight, weak or have a poor appetite, a diet high in protein and calories may be advised before treatment. This is to prevent any more weight loss and muscle wasting. And it can help you to feel better.

Calories are a measure of the energy your body gets from food. You need calories so your body has the energy to work and grow.

Your dietitian can discuss ways to increase calories. One way is to eat little and often and choose nourishing foods. This can include nutritious snacks and build-up drinks. Adding butter or cream to foods is one way to increase calories. See the centre of this booklet for useful diets high in protein and calories. Your dietitian can also advise you on the most suitable diet.

Severe weight loss

Sometimes severe weight loss (cancer cachexia) can happen due to cancer itself and/or its treatment. This is when there is severe loss of appetite, weight loss, loss of strength and muscle mass. If this happens, there are ways to improve it. Your dietitian and nurse will discuss these with you. See page 34 for more details.

Nutritious snacks high in calories and protein

- Baked potatoes with beans, cheese, tuna, crème fraîche
- Breakfast cereal – hot or cold
- Beans
- Cheese
- Crackers
- Creamy soups or broth
- Custards
- Dips made with cheese or yoghurt
- Hot chocolate
- Ice cream
- Milk puddings
- Milkshakes
- Mousse
- Muffins or scones
- Nuts
- Omelette
- Quiche
- Sandwiches
- Sausages
- Scrambled eggs
- Smoothies made with yoghurt
- Creamy soups or broth
- Yoghurt or fromage frais



Build-up drinks and products

There are other ways to help you if you are not getting enough calories and protein from your diet. You can get special drinks to give you nourishment. These are known as nutritional supplements. Most are high in protein and have extra vitamins and minerals. Some drinks can be added to food. Others are ready-to-drink and come in a variety of flavours. They may be based on juices, yoghurts or milk. These drinks should not replace your food but supplement your diet if you cannot eat well.

There are many types of drinks available, for example, Fortisip®, Ensure Plus®, Complan®, Build-Up® and Fresubin® Energy. There are also drinks for cancer patients like ProSure® and FortiCare® that have fish oils to improve severe weight loss (cachexia). If you have problems swallowing, there are also puddings and powders to thicken food or

drinks. Your dietitian will tell you which ones are suitable for you. You can buy build-up drinks in pharmacies and some supermarkets, or your doctor may prescribe them for you.

Over time the protein and calories in these drinks can help you put on weight. Also, your energy levels may improve and make you feel better.

What if I cannot eat?

Most cancer patients get their nutrients by mouth. But if this is not possible or too difficult, your doctor and dietitian can decide to give you nutrients another way. They can be given through a feeding tube or straight into a vein.

Tube feeding

The need for tube feeding will depend on your type of cancer or surgery and your general health. After major surgery to the digestive system, you may not be able to eat normally at first. You may receive nutrients through a tube passed into your nose, stomach or small bowel for a short while. Nutrients can also be given directly into your stomach using a PEG tube.

Tube feeding can also be done if there is serious weight loss, swallowing difficulties, or when not enough nutrients are taken.

Feeding into a vein

In some cases, feeding may need to be given directly into a vein. This is called total parenteral nutrition (TPN). TPN is only given when the bowel is not working properly or cannot be used, like in a blockage.

Your dietitian will talk to you about special feeding if it is needed.

Who can give me advice about my diet?

There are many experts on the medical team who can give you and your family advice about diet throughout your treatment and afterwards. Your surgeon can let you know what kind of problems to

expect from surgery and when it is safe to start eating again. Other members of the medical team, like dietitians, can give you plenty of advice on the type of foods to eat or avoid.

>>> Getting advice about your diet

Your doctors may be able to give you some advice on diet. Some of the people listed here can give you more specific help.



Dietitian	This is an expert on food and nutrition mainly based in hospitals. They are trained to give advice on diet during illness and use diet to help symptoms. They can also give you advice as an outpatient. Your dietitian may put you in touch with special services in the community too.
Clinical nurse specialist/ oncology liaison nurse	These are specially trained nurses who work in a special cancer care unit. They can give you and your family advice and support about cancer from diagnosis and throughout treatment, but also about your diet and any eating problems. They can put you in touch with a dietitian too.
Radiation therapist	This is a radiotherapist who specialises in giving radiotherapy and advice to cancer patients. This includes nutrition and information about any eating problems due to radiation.
Helpline nurses	These are cancer information nurses in the Irish Cancer Society who can give you advice on eating problems and suggestions on suitable menus. Call them on freefone 1800 200 700.
Medical social worker	This is an expert at giving emotional support to cancer patients. They can help with benefits and entitlements too. If you live alone, they can organise a home-help to shop and prepare your meals.
Support groups	Someone with a similar cancer and treatment as yours can give you practical advice about living with cancer. They may have useful tips about eating problems too.

Eating problems during treatment

Some of the common eating problems are listed here. Some advice on how to ease and cope with them is given. Do ask your dietitian, doctor and nurse for more advice, if you need it. Most of these problems go away once treatment has ended or soon afterwards. Others like dry mouth from radiotherapy may be permanent. Depending on the type of surgery you have, it may take some time for others to clear up.

See the centre of this booklet for useful foods high in protein and calories. If you are a diabetic, vegetarian or vegan, talk to your dietitian about how to get extra proteins and calories in your diet.

>>> Hints & Tips – shopping and cooking



- When you are having treatment or recovering from it, get someone to help you with cooking and shopping or take over.
- Accept all offers of help, even if you prefer to do things yourself.
- Find out if your local shops can deliver your shopping if you order it over the phone.
- If you or someone you know has internet access, order your shopping online from a supermarket.
- Plan and prepare meals in advance.

Poor appetite

- Make the most of your appetite when it's good. Eat when and what you want.
- Take small meals and snacks about every 2–3 hours.
- Take snacks high in calories and protein.
- Keep snacks handy. Try cheese and crackers, sandwiches, muffins or scones.

- Use a smaller plate for your meals. Large portions can be offputting if your appetite is small.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Take plenty of drinks like milk, juices and soups.
- Juice your vegetables with a blender, if you prefer. For example, carrots, celery or parsnips. If you are a diabetic, talk to your dietitian first.
- Try nutritional supplements, like Complan®, when it's hard for you to eat food. Special high-calorie drinks can help to keep your strength up. Your doctor can give you a prescription for these drinks.
- Take only small sips while eating, as drinking might make you full.
- Encourage your family to eat together and make mealtimes relaxing and enjoyable.
- Take regular exercise, if you can, as it may help your appetite. Fresh air can help too.
- Talk to your doctor about medications to help other problems, like constipation, nausea, pain or other side-effects of treatment, if they affect your appetite.

Taste and smell changes

- Eat foods that appeal to your taste buds and smell good.
- Keep your mouth clean by rinsing and brushing – it may improve the taste of foods.
- Eat food cold or at room temperature, if smells bother you.
- Hold off eating foods that no longer appeal to you. Try them again some days or weeks later as you might enjoy them again.
- Flavour foods with onion, garlic or herbs like mint and basil, if you find food tasteless.
- Marinate meat, chicken or fish to help the flavour.
- Try small-sized tasty sandwiches.
- Rinse your mouth with tea, saltwater or baking soda to help clear your taste buds before eating.
- Drink plenty of fluids like water, apple juice or nectars.
- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables rather than canned ones, if possible.
- Use plastic utensils if you have a metallic taste while eating.



Sore mouth, gums or throat

- Take sips of fluids like water often. Drink through a straw if your mouth is painful.
- Eat soft, moist food like omelettes, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, cream soups, natural yoghurt, milkshakes, stews, puddings.
- Moisten dry or solid foods with sauces or gravies.
- Purée or liquidise foods, e.g. fruit and vegetables, in a blender to make them easier to swallow.
- Take cold foods and drinks like ice cream to soothe your mouth.
- Avoid the following foods as they may irritate your mouth:
 - pickled, salty or spicy foods
 - rough food, like crispy bread, dry toast or raw vegetables
 - alcohol and tobacco
 - citrus juices, like orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit or pineapple
 - mouthwashes that contain alcohol or acidic ones.
- Take nutritious fluids like Complian® or Build-Up®, and desserts like yoghurt, ice cream, custard. Eating foods high in protein and calories will quicken healing.
- Keep your mouth fresh and clean. Try pineapple chunks, but avoid them if they sting.
- Rinse your mouth often with a salt and baking soda mouthwash. Add 1 teaspoon of baking soda to 1 pints of water.
- Use special mouthwashes and gels often. Ask your nurse and doctor about safe ones to use.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Put it into a container of warm water to soften the bristles.
- Ask your doctor and nurse for painkillers if your mouth is painful. They may prescribe some antiseptic or local anaesthetic gels or lozenges.
- Visit your dentist regularly. He or she can give you advice about caring for your mouth and special mouthwashes.

Dry mouth

- Take sips of fluids like water often. Sucking ice cubes may help too.
- Drinking milk can help to protect your teeth. It is also a good source of protein and calories.
- Eat soft moist food. Moisten your food with sauces or gravy.
- Rinse your mouth regularly, especially before and after meals.
- Avoid the following as it can irritate or dry out your mouth:
 - salty and spicy foods
 - rough food, like crispy bread, dry toast or raw vegetables
 - alcohol and tobacco
 - mouthwashes that contain alcohol or acidic ones.
- Use special mouthwashes, gels and moisturisers often. For example, Biotène Oralbalance or BioXtra products. These contain saliva enzymes.
- If you have thick saliva, rinse your mouth often with a baking soda mouthwash. Add 1 teaspoon of baking soda to 1½ pints of water.
- Brush your teeth after every meal or snack. Use a soft toothbrush. Put it into a container of warm water to soften the bristles.
- Stimulate the flow of saliva with sugarless gum, boiled sweets or pastilles.
- Keep your lips moist with Vaseline or a lip balm.



Difficulty swallowing

- Eat your favourite foods but soften them with sauces and gravies, where possible.
- Try eating soft, liquid foods like soups, broths, milkshakes, custards, natural yoghurt. But vary them so you don't get bored. Make sure soups and broths have potato, meat or fish in them for extra nourishment.
- Thick liquids may be easier to swallow. Add thickeners to liquids like gelatine, flour or cornstarch. Semisolid foods like puréed vegetables and fruit and mashed potatoes can help too. Commercial thickeners may also be bought.
- Chop up meat and vegetables finely for stews or casseroles.
- Blend or liquidise cooked foods.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Take drinks high in calories and protein like Fortisip, Ensure, ProSure, Complan, Build-Up. Your dietitian can advise you about these and your doctor may prescribe them.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of fluid each day.
- Follow your speech therapist's advice for any special eating techniques.

Indigestion

- Sipping some drops of peppermint oil in hot water may help to relieve any discomfort.
- Herbal teas like mint or liquorice may help.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, alcohol, spicy foods, pickles and citrus fruits.
- Your doctor may prescribe an antacid like Gaviscon, Aludrox or Maalox to help.
- If indigestion is worse at night, avoid eating or drinking for 3 to 4 hours before bedtime.

Feeling full

- Eat smaller meals often.
- As you begin to feel less full, gradually increase the amounts of food and the time between meals.
- Avoid foods high in fibre to prevent you feeling full very quickly. For example, large portions of fruit and vegetables, wholegrain rice and pasta, wholemeal bread.
- Do not drink large amounts of liquids, especially fizzy drinks, just before mealtimes.

Nausea (feeling sick)

- If you have nausea during radiotherapy or chemotherapy, avoid eating for 1–2 hours before treatment.
- Drink clear liquids to prevent getting dehydrated.
- Take plenty of nourishing fluids if you miss a meal or two.
- Take fluids in between meals, as they may fill you up when eating.
- Eating little and often may help. Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Rest after your meals.
- Eat before you get hungry, as hunger can make nausea worse.
- Try the following foods and drink as they might help:
 - fizzy drinks like mineral water, ginger ale, 7-Up or Sprite
 - cold foods like yoghurt, boiled potatoes, rice, noodles, breakfast cereal or cheese
 - dry food like toast, crackers or breakfast cereals. This can help in the morning before you get up
 - herbal teas like mint or ginger
- Avoid the following foods, as they may make nausea worse:
 - fatty, greasy or fried foods
 - spicy foods
 - very sugary foods
 - foods with a strong odour
 - hot meals.

- If you have severe nausea, avoid your favourite foods. You may end up hating them after severe bouts of nausea.
- Ask a friend or family member to cook your meals if odours affect you.
- Ask your doctor and nurse about any anti-sickness medication you could take. Take them as advised.
- Relaxation exercises, acupuncture or meditation can sometimes help to prevent nausea.

Vomiting

- Do not eat anything until the vomiting has stopped and is under control.
- When the vomiting is under control, try small amounts of clear liquids like water.
- Carry on taking small amounts of liquid as often as you can keep them down.
- When you can keep down clear liquids, try a full liquid diet or a soft diet.
- Ask your doctor and nurse about any anti-sickness medication you could take. Take them as advised.
- If you get sick shortly after radiotherapy or chemotherapy, avoid eating for 1–2 hours before and after treatment.
- A rest after meals may help prevent vomiting.
- Relaxation exercises or acupuncture can sometimes help to prevent vomiting.



NUTRITIOUS SNACKS

- ✔ Cereals – hot or cold
- ✔ Beans on toast
- ✔ Cheese and crackers
- ✔ Custards
- ✔ Hot chocolate (make with milk)
- ✔ Milk puddings
- ✔ Milkshakes
- ✔ Creamy soups
- ✔ Yoghurt or fromage frais
- ✔ Smoothies
- ✔ Mousses



- ✔ Sandwiches
- ✔ Nuts
- ✔ Omelettes
- ✔ Quiche



- ✔ Muffins or scones
- ✔ Sausages
- ✔ Scrambled eggs
- ✔ Baked potatoes with beans, cheese, tuna
- ✔ Dips made with cheese or yoghurt



LIQUIDS



CLEAR LIQUIDS



- ❖ Water
- ❖ Fruit juices without fruit pieces
- ❖ Clear broth
- ❖ Consommé
- ❖ Ice pops
- ❖ Honey
- ❖ Clear fizzy drinks like Flat 7-Up or Sprite
- ❖ Lucozade
- ❖ Sports drinks
- ❖ Strained vegetable broth



FULL LIQUIDS

- ❖ Milk
- ❖ Fruit juices
- ❖ Fruit nectars
- ❖ Fresh or frozen yoghurt
- ❖ Milkshakes
- ❖ Fruit purée
- ❖ Smooth ice cream
- ❖ Liquidised soup
- ❖ Tomato juice
- ❖ Vegetable juice
- ❖ Build-up drinks
- ❖ Soft custard
- ❖ Drinking chocolate



SOFT DIET

- ❖ Omelette or scrambled egg
- ❖ Baked egg custard
- ❖ Egg mayonnaise
- ❖ Creamed soups
- ❖ French toast
- ❖ Baked beans with grated cheese
- ❖ Tinned spaghetti with grated cheese
- ❖ Macaroni cheese
- ❖ Cauliflower with cheese
- ❖ Casseroles or stews
- ❖ Shepherd's pie or cottage pie
- ❖ Bolognese sauce
- ❖ Lasagne
- ❖ Savoury mince



- ❖ Pasta with creamy tomato sauce
- ❖ Soft poached or flaked fish in sauce
- ❖ Salmon mousse
- ❖ Fish and potato in a creamy sauce
- ❖ Mashed carrots with honey and cream
- ❖ Vegetables mashed with butter and melted cheese
- ❖ Chicken in cream sauce
- ❖ Quiche
- ❖ Jacket potato with butter, grated cheese or cream cheese
- ❖ Dips like hummus, pesto, guacamole, cream cheese

HOW TO INCREASE CALORIES

- Add butter or margarine to soups, mashed and baked potatoes, sauces, cooked vegetables, rice.
- Add whipped cream to desserts, puddings and fruit. Add it unsweetened to mashed potatoes and puréed vegetables.
- Add milk or cream to soups, sauces, puddings, custards, cereals. Use cream instead of milk in recipes.
- Add cheese to casseroles, potatoes, vegetables, omelettes, sandwiches. Melt where possible.
- Add chopped hard-boiled eggs to salads, vegetables, casseroles.
- Sauté or fry foods if you can tolerate them.
- Add sauces or gravies to your food.



HOW TO INCREASE PROTEIN

- Eat more hard and soft cheeses. Add them to food where possible.
- Use milk instead of water as a drink and in cooking when possible. Use full fat milk.
- Take build-up drinks.
- Add ice cream or yoghurt to drinks, fruit and cereals.
- Add eggs to your food whenever possible. Avoid raw eggs.
- Add nuts, seeds and wheat germ to your food. Add to casseroles, salads, breads, biscuits.
- Add chopped meat or fish to vegetables, salads, casseroles, soups, baked potatoes.
- Eat more beans and peas. Add to soups and casseroles.

Cramping

- Eat and drink slowly. Small mouthfuls and chewing well can help.
- Avoid food and drink that can cause wind or cramps like beer, beans, cabbage, garlic, spicy foods and sugar-free gum and sweets made with sorbitol.
- Let fizzy drinks go flat before drinking them.
- Herbal teas like mint or liquorice may help.
- Gentle exercise like walking can ease cramps.

Bloating

- Avoid gassy foods like beans, brussels sprouts, onions, celery, carrots, raisins, bananas, prune juice, apricots, and wheatgerm.
- Avoid gassy or fizzy drinks and beer.
- Eat and drink slowly and chew your food well.
- Don't skip meals.
- Eat 4 to 6 small meals spread out over the day. Avoid large meals.
- Add fibre to your diet slowly. For example, small amounts of vegetables, fresh and dried fruits, and wholegrains. Fibre may make bloating worse for some people.
- Try not to talk while eating.
- Avoid chewing gum and sucking on hard sweets.
- Do not smoke.
- Talk to your doctor and nurse to see if your medication or lactose intolerance is causing the bloating.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if any over-the-counter preparations can help.
- If you wear dentures, check with your dentist that they fit properly.
- Exercise regularly, if you can. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.

Diarrhoea

- Drink plenty of fluids to replace what you lose with diarrhoea. Take liquids 30 minutes to 1 hour after your meal and/or between meals.
- Eat small amounts of food during the day instead of three large meals.
- Avoid high-fibre foods like bran, wholegrain cereals, nuts and seeds, beans and peas, dried fruits, raw fruits and vegetables.
- Your doctor may prescribe something to control the diarrhoea. Take this as advised.
- Avoid the following foods as they can make the diarrhoea worse:
 - fatty, greasy and fried foods
 - gassy or fizzy drinks
 - drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea, coke and hot chocolate
 - citrus fruits like orange, grapefruit and tomato juices
 - very hot or very cold fluids
 - alcohol and tobacco
 - foods containing sorbitol, the artificial sweetener.
- Take live yoghurt or probiotic yoghurt drinks to replace any healthy bacteria lost from your bowel. Avoid these if your white blood cell count is low. Check with your doctor if you are unsure.
- Add a pinch of nutmeg to food, as it can make the bowel less active.
- Call your doctor if the diarrhoea continues or gets worse, or if the stools are red or dark in colour.

Constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids. For example, 2 litres of water every day.
- Eat regular meals and at the same time each day.
- Eat foods high in fibre like breakfast cereals, beans, brown rice, fruit, wholegrain breads, nuts.
- Drink fig syrup or prune juice as they can help.
- Drink hot or cold drinks.

- Aim to have a bowel motion at the same time each day.
- Get some gentle exercise.
- Ask your doctor for a suitable laxative, especially if you are taking painkillers that cause constipation.

Fatigue (too tired to cook/eat)

- Prepare meals in advance when you have the energy. Freeze them for when you feel too tired to cook.
- Take nourishing drinks for the times you do not feel like eating.
- Buy ready-made meals like frozen meals, takeaways, tinned foods.
- Stock up on convenience foods.
- Ask family and friends to help you shop, prepare and cook food.
- Get enough rest. Nap during the day.
- Get some regular exercise, if possible, like walking.



Weight loss

- Make the most of your appetite when it's good. Eat when you want.
- Take nourishing snacks high in calories and full of protein.
- Take snacks about every 2–3 hours. Do not skip meals.
- Add calories to food. See the centre pages of this booklet for suggestions.
- Avoid drinking liquids before meals.
- Take only small sips at mealtimes, as fluids may make you full.
- Do not put too much food on your plate. It can be offputting if your appetite is small.
- Try nutritional supplements when you find it hard to eat food.
- Keep snacks handy. Try cheese and crackers, sandwiches, muffins or scones.
- Take special high-calorie drinks to help keep your strength up. Your doctor can give you a prescription for these drinks.
- Encourage your family to eat together and make mealtimes relaxing and enjoyable.

Severe weight loss (cancer cachexia)

- Your dietitian will advise you on any special food and drinks to take.
- Eat more protein and calories in your diet.
- Eat smaller meals and often.
- Add cream or butter to food to increase calories and protein.
- Take drinks like juices, milk or sweetened drinks.
- Add diced meat or cheese to sauces, vegetables, soups, and casseroles.
- Choose nourishing snacks like yoghurts, milk puddings, cereal with milk, or crackers and cheese. Or take snacks high in calories like nuts, sweets and dried fruits during the day.
- Take nutrition supplements like milkshakes and build-up drinks.
- Eat more fats. Add cream, butter or margarine to breads and vegetables. Add lots of gravies and sauces to your foods.
- If you cannot digest fat, talk to your dietitian about other sources of fat. They may advise you on suitable supplements to take.

Too much weight gain

Caused by medication

Some weight gain during treatment may be caused by medications like steroids. Once the steroids are stopped, you will have less of an appetite and lose any weight gained.

- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables. Juice your vegetables if you prefer.
- Eat wholegrain starchy foods like brown bread, pasta, potatoes (with skins), high-fibre breakfast cereals and brown rice, so you feel full. Try to choose the high-fibre varieties.
- Choose lean meat (beef or pork without the fat, skinless chicken).
- Take low-fat dairy products like low-fat milk or diet yoghurt.
- Avoid sweets, biscuits and cakes, and snacks between meals.
- Avoid fried foods. Grill or steam your food instead.
- Get more exercise, if possible.
- Talk to your dietitian if you are worried about the amount of weight gained.
- Don't diet without getting the advice of your doctor and dietitian first.

Caused by extra fluids

Some weight gain during hormone therapy or chemotherapy may be caused by extra fluid in your body. This holding on to extra water is known as fluid retention or oedema.

- Limit the amount of salt you take, if advised by your doctor or dietitian.
- Only take water pills (diuretics) prescribed by your doctor.

Other problems

Other problems to the stomach or bowel that can happen after surgery include:

- Acid stomach
- Fat intolerance
- Dumping syndrome – when the small bowel rapidly fills with undigested food from the stomach
- Decreased absorption of nutrients

After surgery, your doctor and nurse will keep a close eye on you to see if you develop these problems. For more information, talk to your doctor, dietitian or nurse. Or call the National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700 for the booklets, *Understanding Cancer of the Stomach* or *Understanding Cancer of the Colon and Rectum*.



Hints & Tips – general guide to eating and drinking

- Eat a balanced and varied diet.
- Eat smaller meals and often.
- Eat food that you enjoy and can eat with family and friends.
- Check with your doctor and nurse if you can drink alcohol.
- Be careful about avoiding certain foods because you think they are harmful. If you avoid dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and cheese, you will exclude the main sources of calcium in your diet. Avoid them only if advised by your dietitian.
- Avoid red meat, poultry and eggs, only if advised by your dietitian. Otherwise, you will exclude a source of protein and iron from your diet.
- If you eat too many high-fibre foods, like fruit and vegetables, it can cause bloating and diarrhoea.
- There is no proof that organic foods are better than non-organic foods. In general, organic foods are more expensive.



Nutrition after treatment

Tips for carers

When your friend or loved one is ill, it is natural to want to feed them as well as possible. Sometimes this is not so easy. They may have eating problems due to treatment. They may have little or no appetite and find it hard to swallow. Here are some things to consider at this time:

- Ask what they would prefer to eat.
- Don't force them into eating and drinking. Encourage without being pushy.
- Expect that their food tastes will change from day to day. They may go off their favourite food or else try something that wasn't tolerated the day before.
- Offer small, frequent meals and snacks every 2 hours.
- Offer foods high in protein and calories.
- Offer soft or liquid foods if they're having problems swallowing.
- Have nutritious foods and drinks handy, whenever they want to eat.
- Have food within easy reach, for example, on a bedside table.
- Be flexible and try different foods.
- Put food on a small plate so the amount is not overwhelming.
- Present food in an attractive way. If your child is ill, present it in a colourful and fun way.
- If they cannot eat, encourage plenty of fluids.
- Avoid food smells caused by food preparation.
- Avoid liquids with meals to prevent them feeling full, unless needed to help with dry mouth and swallowing.
- Ask the dietitian for advice on suitable foods, build-up drinks and products.

Talking about the importance of food can be upsetting for those who have advanced cancer. It may be best to give them what they like to

eat and often. Sometimes it can help to remove bathroom scales or mirrors if a lot of weight had been lost. Also, getting clothes a smaller size can help. Do check that their dentures still fit as well.

Getting back to healthy eating

Once your treatment is over, ask your doctor if there is any food you should avoid in future. Your dietitian will be able to help you plan some balanced diets.

It may take some time before you feel back to normal. Don't feel you should prepare home-cooked meals straightway.



Preparing meals

- Make simple meals using easy-to-prepare recipes.
- Buy some prepared foods to make cooking easier.
- Stock up on your favourite foods so you can shop less often.
- Buy foods you are able to eat even when ill.
- Cook enough for two or three meals.
- Freeze foods in meal-sized portions.
- Think about ways you used to make mealtimes special and try them again.
- Don't be afraid to ask a friend or family member for help with cooking or shopping.
- Ask the social worker in the hospital to arrange a home help for you if you live alone.



Staying healthy and preventing cancer returning

- Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day. This is especially important if you have or had breast or colon cancer. If you are overweight, take more exercise and eat less fat. Check with your doctor or dietitian before you start any exercise programme.
- Avoid sugary drinks. Limit processed foods that are high in added sugar or low in fibre or high in fat.
- Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables, wholegrains and pulses (beans, peas).
- Limit the amount of red meat (beef, pork, lamb) you eat. Eat no more than 500g of cooked meat per week. Avoid processed meats (some sausages, black and white pudding, bacon, ham, cornbeef, salami).
- Drink less alcohol. Limit it to 2 drinks for men and 1 drink for women a day. Have a few days free of alcohol each week.
- Eat less salty foods, especially those processed with salt.
- Avoid dietary supplements if you have a balanced diet. But take them if advised by your doctor or dietitian.
- If you are breastfeeding, do it totally for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods.
- Follow the above guidelines for cancer prevention. Also, get advice about your diet from your dietitian.



Other diets and supplements

Low bacteria diets

Most cancer patients do not have to worry about low bacteria diets. Usually, basic food hygiene is enough to prevent you getting any bugs. But some patients may have a low white cell count due to their cancer or treatment. As a result, you may be at risk of getting infections like food poisoning. It is best to avoid the following foods:

- Raw or lightly cooked eggs
- Coleslaw
- Unpasteurised cheeses like Brie, Camembert, Feta, Stilton, Blue, Roquefort
- Pâté
- Shellfish.

Probiotics contain live bacteria so it is best to avoid these until your white cell count is normal. Probiotics are found in live or bio yoghurts and drinks. Your doctor, nurse and dietitian can give you more advice on precautions if your blood count is low.

Ways to prevent food poisoning

- Wash your hands before and after you handle any food.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and dairy products. For example, any cheese, milk, yoghurt that has not been pasteurised.
- Never eat any vegetable, fruit or bread that has signs of mould.
- Avoid probiotic, live or bio dairy products.
- Cook meat and eggs fully. Avoid raw and undercooked meat, poultry, fish or eggs.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables well. Avoid them if they can't be washed well.
- Avoid tinned food if it shows any bulges.
- Thaw meat in the fridge and not on the kitchen counter.
- Do not eat food left out at room temperature for longer than 90 minutes.

- Check use-by dates on all foods and drinks. Do not eat foods or drinks that are out of date.
- Keep kitchen surfaces clean and wash chopping boards in warm soapy water after use.
- Clean your fridge and cupboards often. Get help from a family member or friend if you don't have the energy for cleaning.
- If you are feeling unwell, do not prepare foods for others.

Other diets

There is no one food or special diet that has been proven to control cancer or reduce your risk of it coming back. Too much of any one food is not helpful and may even be harmful. Fruit and vegetables are generally good for you, but large amounts may cause problems. This is especially true if they are mainly what you eat.

Be careful about using special diets when receiving cancer treatments. Many of these diets are restrictive. This means that certain food items must be avoided. Special diets are likely to make you lose weight, at a time when you need energy and strength most.

>>> Avoid special diets because you are likely to lose weight.

After a cancer diagnosis, some people may decide to stop eating dairy products or take less calcium. While it may be good to eat a low-fat diet in general, it is not good to cut out all sources of fat and protein in your diet. Ask your dietitian for advice first.

>>> Should I change my diet?

Each person will have their own special nutrition needs. For that reason, it is best to talk to your doctor or dietitian about the foods you should be eating or avoiding. If your appetite is normal and you have not lost any weight, the best advice is to eat a balanced and varied diet. It is also not wise to experiment with diets during chemotherapy or radiotherapy. During chemotherapy, you may feel fatigued, lose your appetite and energy. You will need plenty of nutrition and calories to keep your strength up. Some cancer treatments may cause you to put on weight. It is best not to try to lose this extra weight until all your treatments are finished.

Low-sugar diet

There are many myths about cancer and one of them is that 'sugar feeds cancer'. For this reason, some people greatly reduce the amount of sugar in their diet. There is no good reason to do this. It is best to eat a well-balanced diet while on chemotherapy.

If you taking steroids while on chemotherapy or have diabetes, your blood sugars will be checked often. Again, you should eat a well-balanced diet, as advised by your dietitian. If there are any changes to your blood sugars, your dietitian and nurse will advise you on your diet.

Taking supplements

Most people get all the nutrients they need from a balanced and varied diet. Unless you are having problems after treatment, supplements like iron or multivitamins are usually not needed.

Some people with cancer take large amounts of supplements to boost their immune system. Or they may take them in the hope of killing cancer cells. There is no proof that this will happen. Some of these substances can be harmful. In fact, large doses of some vitamins and minerals may make chemotherapy and radiotherapy work less well.

Let your doctor or nurse know if you are taking any dietary supplements, no matter how safe you think they are. Be careful what you read in the newspapers or on the internet. Adverts may say that something has been used for years, but that does not prove it is safe or helpful. You do not need a prescription to buy dietary supplements, but be careful and use common sense.

Vitamin therapy

Vitamins are nutrients needed in small amounts for the normal growth and health of your body. Because the body does not make them, they must be taken in in food. Multivitamin supplements can be used safely as part of healthy eating, but may not be necessary. It is best to take them at the recommended daily allowance (RDA).

Some people believe that large doses of vitamins can prevent or cure cancer. But too much of any vitamin is not safe. This is true for those who are healthy too. High doses of vitamins can be toxic to the body. Vitamins are also known to have strong actions in the body. For example, high doses of vitamins may affect how chemotherapy and radiotherapy work.

Types of vitamins

Vitamins are divided into two groups. There are four fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) and nine water-soluble vitamins (eight B vitamins and vitamin C). The fat-soluble ones are stored in your body and can be toxic when too much is taken. In general, the water-soluble ones are not stored in your body and so cause fewer problems. Avoid all supplements if you are pregnant, unless advised by your doctor. Discuss with your dietitian the dosage of vitamins you should take.

Some vitamins may also affect chemotherapy drugs. For example, vitamin B₉ supplements. These may interfere with some cancer drugs, such as methotrexate. It may also affect your white cell count after chemotherapy. Too much vitamin C in particular can make radiotherapy or chemotherapy work less well.

Mineral therapy

Minerals are nutrients needed by your body in small amounts to help it work properly and stay strong. Examples include iron, calcium, potassium and sodium. Some Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese Medicine remedies may contain lead, mercury or arsenic at levels that could be harmful. They might interact with medication you are taking as well. For that reason, tell your doctor about any herbal remedies you are taking. For those who have advanced breast cancer it may be best to avoid calcium supplements. Talk to your nurse or dietitian about this.

Complementary and alternative diets

Today many patients are interested in complementary and alternative therapies. A therapy is complementary when it is given **along with** conventional or standard medical treatments. Alternative is when the treatment is given **instead of** conventional treatments. These therapies include diet therapy, megavitamin therapy and herbalism. Most doctors do not believe that alternative diets can cure or control cancer.

There are many types of cancer diets. Some believe they can improve your well-being but also cure you. But be careful because there is no evidence that they do.

Many of these diets focus on eating fruit and vegetables and avoiding red meat, sugar, caffeine, alcohol and dairy products. Most are low-calorie diets that cut out many important sources of protein and carbohydrates. And they may not be very tasty. You are likely to lose weight on these diets. Too much high-fibre foods, like fruit and vegetables, can also lead to bloating and diarrhoea. They are not best for those receiving cancer treatments and can be expensive and harmful.

Some complementary and alternative diets you may hear about are:

- The Bristol diet

- The Gerson diet
- Dairy-free diet
- Macrobiotic diet

Before you try any of these diets, you should talk to your doctor, dietitian or nurse.



If you decide to use complementary or alternative diets...



Before you decide to change your diet and take supplements your own, be sure to talk to your doctor, dietitian or nurse. Some methods can be safely used along with standard medical treatment. But others can interfere with standard treatment or cause serious side-effects. For that reason, it is important to talk openly with your GP or cancer specialist if you are thinking of having treatment with either a complementary or alternative practitioner. Don't be afraid that your doctor will be offended by your wish for other treatments. In fact, he or she may be able to advise a safe and useful therapy for you.

Be cautious in selecting a practitioner. Don't be misled by promises of cures. At present in Ireland, this area is not fully regulated. Ensure that the practitioners you plan to visit are properly qualified and have a good reputation. Check to see if they belong to a professional body or not. If you are unsure but would like to know what other patients have found helpful, contact your doctor or a patient support group. Also, it is important to make sure that the practitioner is charging a fair price for your treatment.

More information is available in a free booklet from the Irish Cancer Society called *Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies. A Guide for Cancer Patients*. If you would like a copy or more advice, call the National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700.

Detox therapies

Some people are a little uneasy about taking chemotherapy drugs. You may worry that toxins due to treatment will build up in your body. You may feel that your body needs to be 'detoxed' as a result. Be careful about deciding to have any therapies that claim to clean out your bowel. These include colonic irrigation and metabolic therapy using coffee enemas.

These treatments may be harmful if you've had surgery or have any bowel conditions. They can lead to dehydration, chemical imbalances, and infections. Ask your doctor, nurse or dietitian for advice before taking any detox therapy.

Herbs

Herbs found in nature have been used to treat illness for centuries. Many of them are safe to use but others can have strong effects. Just because something grows naturally does not mean it is safe. Remember herbal remedies are also drugs. They can affect the body in many ways – known and unknown. Do ask your doctor's advice before taking any herb.

Some people take herbs to boost their immune system or cure cancer. But they can interact with medicines you are taking. More research is needed to see if they have any positive effects.

Remember...

- Herbs that can help to prevent a disease may not have any benefits once you have the disease.
- Herbs may cure animals of cancer when tested in a laboratory. But when tested on humans they do not have the same effects.
- Some herbs may be mixed with dangerous materials like lead and mercury or hormones like phytoestrogens.
- Some herbs may interact with your cancer or treatment in unknown ways.
- Taking some supplements may be good for you but finding accurate information about them may be hard.

Support resources

Irish Cancer Society Services

The Irish Cancer Society (ICS) funds a range of cancer support services that give care and support for people with cancer at home and in hospital.



- Cancer Information Service (CIS)
- Action Breast Cancer
- Action Prostate Cancer
- Counselling
- Oncology liaison nurses
- Night nursing
- Homecare nurses
- Cancer support groups
- Cancer information booklets
- Patient grants



Cancer Information Service (CIS)

The Society also provides a Cancer Information Service with a wide range of services: the **National Cancer Helpline** is a freefone service that gives confidential information, support and guidance to people concerned about cancer. It is staffed by specialist cancer nurses who have access to the most up-to-date facts on cancer-related issues. These include prevention of cancer, risk factors, screening, dealing with a cancer diagnosis, different treatments, counselling and other support services. The helpline can also put patients in contact with the various support groups that are available. The helpline 1800 200 700 operates Monday to Thursday from 9am to 7pm, and every Friday from 9am to 5pm.

All queries or concerns about cancer can be emailed to the CIS at helpline@irishcancer.ie. The **walk-in caller service** allows anyone with concerns about cancer to freely visit the Society to discuss them in private. **CancerForum** is a bulletin board on our website (www.irishcancer.ie) that gives the public the chance to post their comments. The **CancerChat service** is a live chatroom with a link to a CIS nurse.

Action Breast Cancer

Action Breast Cancer (ABC) is a project of the ICS that provides breast cancer information and support and also funds breast cancer research. Its services are free and confidential. These include a national helpline, publications, one-to-one support, breast awareness talks and advocacy. The ABC helpline **1800 90 30 40** runs weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

Cancer Prostate Cancer

Action Prostate Cancer is a project of the ICS that provides prostate cancer information and support. A **Prostate Cancer Information Service** freefone 1800 380 380 runs Monday to Thursday from 9am to 7pm, and every Friday from 9am to 5pm. All queries or concerns about prostate cancer can be emailed to prostate@irishcancer.ie

Counselling

Coping with a cancer diagnosis can be very stressful at times. Patients and their families sometimes find it difficult to come to terms with the illness. Many people feel that they cannot talk to a close friend or relative. Counselling can provide emotional support in a safe and confidential environment. Call the National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700 to find out about counselling services provided by the ICS and services available in your area.

Oncology liaison nurses

The Irish Cancer Society funds oncology liaison nurses who provide information as well as emotional and practical support to the patient and his or her family. Oncology liaison nurses work as part of the hospital team in specialist cancer centres.

Night nursing

The Irish Cancer Society can provide a night nurse, free of charge, for up to 70 hours (mainly night hours) to families who are caring for a seriously ill person at home. If you need help, you can find out more about this service from a member of the homecare team, your GP or local public health nurse.

Homecare nurses

Homecare nurses are specialist palliative care nurses who offer advice on pain control and other symptoms. These nurses work with GPs and public health nurses to form homecare teams bringing care and support, free of charge, to patients in their own homes. Based in local hospitals, health centres and hospices, they can be contacted through your GP or public health nurse. The Irish Cancer Society contributes financially to this service.

Cancer support groups

The ICS funds a range of support groups set up to support you and your family at time of diagnosis, throughout treatment and afterwards.

Cancer information booklets

These booklets provide information on all aspects of cancer and its treatment. They also offer practical advice on learning how to cope with your illness. The booklets are available free of charge from the Irish Cancer Society.

Patient grants

A diagnosis of cancer can bring with it the added burden of financial worries. In certain circumstances, the Irish Cancer Society can provide limited financial assistance to patients in need. If you would like to request this kind of help, contact your oncology or medical social worker at the hospital where you have been treated. He/she should then make the request in writing to the Irish Cancer Society.



If you would like more information on any of the above services, call the National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700.



Useful organisations

Irish Cancer Society

43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 231 0500
Fax: 01 231 0555
National Cancer Helpline **1800 200 700**
Action Breast Cancer (ABC) **1800 30 90 40**
Action Prostate Cancer **1800 380 380**
Email: helpline@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.cancer.ie

Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute (INDI)

Ashgrove House
Kill Avenue
Dún Laoghaire
Co Dublin
Tel: 01 280 4839
Email: info@indi.ie
Website: www.indi.ie

The Carers' Association

Bulger House
Patrick Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 057 932 2933
Email: info@carersireland.com
Website: www.carersireland.com

Dept of Social and Family Affairs –

Information Service
Oisín House
212–213 Pearse Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 1850 662 244
Email: info@welfare.ie
Website: www.welfare.ie

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

Abbey Court
Lower Abbey Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 817 1300
Callsave 1890 33 66 77
Email: info@fsai.ie
Website: www.fsai.ie

Health insurers

Hibernian Health (formerly VIVAS Health)

Mountain View
Central Park
Leopardstown
Dublin 18
Tel: 1850 717 717
Email: info@hibernianhealthinsurance.ie
Websites: www.vivashealth.ie
www.hibernian.ie/online/health

Quinn Healthcare (formerly BUPA)

Mill Island
Fermoy
Co Cork
Local: 1890 700 890
Fax: 025 42122
Email: info@quinn-healthcare.com
Website: www.quinn-healthcare.com

Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI)

VHI House
Lower Abbey Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 872 4499
Email: info@vhi.ie
Website: www.vhi.ie

Support groups & support centres

Bowel Cancer Support Group

c/o Irish Cancer Society
43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700
Email: support@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.cancer.ie

CanTeen Ireland

Young Peoples' Cancer Support Group

c/o Carmichael Centre
Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 872 2012
Email: canteen@oceanfree.net

Lymphoma Support Ireland (LSI)

c/o Irish Cancer Society
43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700
Email: support@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.lymphoma.ie

Men Against Cancer (MAC)

c/o Irish Cancer Society
43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700
Email: support@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.cancer.ie

Reach to Recovery

c/o Irish Cancer Society
43/45 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4
Action Breast Cancer Helpline
1800 30 90 40
Email: support@irishcancer.ie
Website: www.cancer.ie

ARC Cancer Support Centre

ARC House
65 Eccles Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 830 7333
Email: info@arccancersupport.ie
Website: www.arccancersupport.ie

Bray Cancer Support & Information Centre

36B Main Street
Bray
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 286 6966
Email: bcsc@iol.ie
Website: www.braycancersupport.ie

Beacon Cancer Support Centre

Suite 15
Beacon Court
Sandyford
Co Dublin
Tel: 01 213 5654

Cancer Information & Support Centre

Mid-Western Regional Hospital
Dooradoyle
Co Limerick
Tel: 061 482615
Website: www.mwhb.ie/cancercentre

Cork ARC Cancer Support House

Cliffdale
5 O'Donovan Rossa Road
Cork
Tel: 021 434 6688
Email: karen@corkcancersupport.ie
Website: www.corkcancersupport.ie

The Cuisle Centre

Cancer Support Group
Block Road
Portlaoise
Co Laois
Tel: 057 868 1492
Email: cuislecentre@eircom.net

Dóchas – Offaly Cancer Support

Teach Dóchas
12 Henry Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 28268
Email: dochasoffaly@hotmail.com

'Solás' – Donegal Cancer Support Centre

St Joseph's Avenue
Donegal Town
Tel: 074 974 0837
Email: solacedonegal@eircom.net

Dundalk Cancer Support Group

Community Office
Dundalk Partnership Court
Park Street
Dundalk
Co Louth
Tel: 042 39693
Website: dconroy@actioncancer.org

Éist – Carlow Cancer Support Group

Tel: 087 767 3240 /
086 316 3838 / 085 144 0510

The Gary Kelly Support Centre

Georges Street
Drogheda
Co Louth
Tel: 041 980 5100
Fax: 041 980 5101
Email: info@garykellycentre.org
Website: www.garykellycentre.org

Greystones Cancer Support

La Touche Place
Greystones
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 287 1601
Email: kk@kathleenkelleher.com

HOPE

Enniscorthy Cancer Support & Information
Centre
22 Upper Weafer Street
Enniscorthy
Co Wexford
Tel: 053 9238 555

Inis Aoibhinn – Cancer Care West

Costello Road
University College Hospital Galway
Tel: 091 545 000
Email: info@cancercarewest.ie
Website: www.cancercarewest.ie

The LARCC Retreat Centre

Ballinalack
Mullingar
Co Westmeath
Tel: 044 71971
Callsave 1850 719719
Email: info@larcc.ie
Website: www.larcc.ie

Lios Aoibhinn Cancer Support Centre

85 Nutley Lane
Donnybrook
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 260 5756

Listowel Cancer Support Group

Co Kerry
Tel: 068 21741 / 087 237 0766

Little Way Cancer Support Centre

4 Woods Way
College Road
Clane
Co Kildare
Tel: 045 902 996
Email: littlewayclane@eircom.net
Website: www.littlewaycancersupport.com

Living Beyond Cancer

c/o Oncology Department
Letterkenny General Hospital
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 912 5888 (Bleep 674)

Mayo Cancer Support

Association
Rock Rose House
32 St Patrick's Avenue
Castlebar
Co Mayo
Tel: 094 903 8407

Roscommon Cancer Support Group

Vita House Family Centre
Abbey Street
Roscommon
Tel: 090 662 5898
Email: vitahouse@eircom.net

Sligo Cancer Support Centre

2A Wine Street
Sligo
Tel: 071 70399
Email: scsg@tinet.ie

South East Cancer Foundation

7 Sealy Close
Earlscourt
Waterford
Tel: 051 876629
Fax: 051 876718
Email: infosecf@eircom.net

The Tuam Cancer Care Centre

30 Temple Jarlath Court
High Street
Tuam
Co Galway
Tel: 093 28522
Email: info@tuamcancercare.ie
Website: www.tuamcancercare.ie

**Turning Point – Positive Health
Centre**

23 Crofton Road
Dún Laoghaire
Co Dublin
Tel: 01 280 7888
Email: turningpoint@eircom.net
Website: www.turningpoint.ie

West Clare Cancer Support Group

Tel: 065 905 6327 / 065 905 1517
Email: HlnKennedy@hotmail.com

**Useful contacts outside
Republic of Ireland****Action Cancer**

Action Cancer House
1 Marlborough Park
Belfast BT9 6XS
Tel: 028 9080 3344
Email: info@actioncancer.org
Website: www.actioncancer.org

American Cancer Society

1599 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329-4251
Website: www.cancer.org

**British Association for Nutritional
Therapy (BANT)**

27 Old Gloucester Street
London WC1N 3XX
Email: theadministrator@bant.org.uk
Website: www.bant.org.uk

British Dietetic Association (BDA)

5th Floor, Charles House
148/9 Great Charles Street
Queensway
Birmingham B3 3HT
Tel: +44 0121 200 8080
Email: info@bda.uk.com
Website: www.bda.uk.com

Cancerbackup

3 Bath Place
Rivington Street
London EC2A 3JR
Tel: +44 207 696 9003
Helpline: +44 207 7392280
Website: www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Macmillan CancerLine

Macmillan Cancer Relief
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ
Tel: +44 20 7840 7840
Email: cancerline@macmillan.org.uk
Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

**Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
(US)**

Website: www.mskcc.org

National Cancer Institute (US)

Website: www.nci.nih.gov

The Ulster Cancer Foundation

40/42 Eglantine Avenue
Belfast BT9 6DX
Tel: 048 906 63281
Website: www.ulstercancer.co.uk

**World Cancer Research Fund
International**

19 Harley Street
London W1G 9QJ
Tel: +44 020 73434200
Email: info@wcrf.org
Website: www.wcrf.org

Helpful books



Free booklets from the Irish Cancer Society

- **Understanding Chemotherapy**
- **Understanding Radiotherapy**
- **Radiation Therapy: A Patient Pathway (DVD)**
- **Coping with Fatigue**
- **Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies**



The Breast Cancer Prevention and Recovery Diet

Suzannah Olivier
Penguin, 2000
ISBN 978-0140283952

The Cancer Survival Cookbook

Donna L Weihofen & Christina Marino
Wiley, 1998
ISBN 0-471346-68-3

The Daily Telegraph Encyclopaedia of Vitamins, Minerals & Herbal Supplements

Dr Sarah Brewer
Robinson, 2002
ISBN 1-84119-184-1

Diet and Cancer

Cancerbackup, 2008
ISBN 1-905384-30-0

Eating Well, Staying Well: During and After Cancer

A Bloch et al.
American Cancer Society, 2006
ISBN 0-944235-51-4

Good Nutrition is Good Medicine: For People with Cancer

Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute/Department of Health and Children, 2002
[This helpful booklet is being revised at present. Do ask your dietitian for a copy.]

Healthy Eating for Life to Prevent and Treat Cancer

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Wiley, 2002
ISBN 978-0471435976

What to Eat if You Have Cancer: A Guide to Adding Nutritional Therapy to Your Treatment Plan

Maureen Keane & Daniella Chace
NTC Publishing, 1996
ISBN 978-0809232611

Questions to ask your doctor

Here is a list of questions that you may like to ask. There is also some space for you to write down your own questions if you prefer. Never be shy about asking questions. It is always better to ask than to worry.

- What eating problems can I expect from treatment?
- Do I have to change my diet?
- How can my diet prevent cancer coming back?
- How can I increase calories?
- How can I increase protein in my diet?
- Where can I get build-up drinks? Do I need a prescription?
- How can I put on weight?
- I'm overweight, can I lose some weight?
- Should I eat any special foods?
- Is it safe to take multivitamins or herbs?

Your own questions

1 _____

Answer _____

2 _____

Answer _____

3 _____

Answer _____

4 _____

Answer _____

5 _____

Answer _____

6 _____

Answer _____



Notes



Acknowledgements

We would like to extend a special word of thanks to the following people for their invaluable contributions to this booklet:

Rosemary Scott, Health Promotion Officer

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Aoife MacNamara, Cancer Information Nurse

Anne-Marie McGrath, Cancer Information Nurse

Reach to Recovery

Patient Reviewers

Would you like more information?

We hope this booklet has been of help to you. At any time in the future, if you feel you would like more information or someone to talk to, please phone our National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700.

Would you like to be a patient reviewer?

If you have any suggestions as to how this booklet could be improved, we would be delighted to hear from you. The views of patients, relatives, carers and friends are all welcome.

Your comments would help us greatly in the preparation of future information booklets for people with cancer and their carers. If you wish to email your comments, have an idea for a new booklet or would like to review any of our booklets, please contact us at reviewers@irishcancer.ie

If you prefer to phone or write to us, see contact details below.

Would you like to help us?

The Irish Cancer Society relies entirely on voluntary contributions from the public to fund its programmes of patient care, education and research. If you would like to support our work in any way – perhaps by making a donation or by organising a local fundraising event – please contact us.

Irish Cancer Society, 43/45 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4

Tel: 01 231 0500 Email: info@irishcancer.ie

The mission of the Irish Cancer Society is to play a vital role in achieving world-class cancer services in Ireland, to ensure fewer people get cancer and those that do have better outcomes. Our goals are focused around prevention, survival and quality of life, with three programme areas to achieve them: advocacy, cancer services and research.

