

HOW TO BUILD YOUR MEAL

When you are undergoing cancer treatment, it is important that you eat balanced meals that will provide you with enough calories and nutrients to give your body the fuel that it needs. Use the chart below to help you build your meal by choosing a protein, grain, fruit and/or vegetable, and one “add-on” (typically a fat source or other high calorie food to really pump up the energy in your meal) to get you on the right track!

***Please note that appropriate serving sizes vary by person. Your protein/calorie needs depend on your individualized cancer treatment plan and body composition. Please talk to your Registered Dietitian regarding your own specific needs!*

BREAKFAST (choose 1 food from each column to build your meal)

Protein	Grain	Fruit/Vegetable	Add-on
1-2 eggs	1 English muffin	1 apple	2 tbsp peanut butter
6 oz Greek yogurt	1 cup cooked oatmeal	½ cup berries	2 tbsp almond butter
1 cup whole milk	1 cup whole grain cereal	1 banana	¼ cup almonds
1 slice mozzarella Cheese	1 slice whole grain toast	½ tomato, sliced	½ avocado
4-6 oz cottage cheese	1 granola bar	1 peach	¼ cup cashews

LUNCH (choose 1 food from each column to build your meal)

Protein	Grain	Fruit/Vegetable	Add-on
2-3 oz of deli turkey	2 slices whole grain toast	1 orange	1 tbsp mayonnaise
3-4 oz chicken breast	1 tortilla	1 cup sliced cucumbers and peppers	1 tbsp vinaigrette dressing
2 tbsp peanut butter	1 bagel	1 banana	1 tbsp honey
1 cup soup or chili made with beans or meat	1 roll	2 cups lettuce + additional veggies + dressing of choice	1 tbsp butter
¼ cup parmesan cheese	1 cup pasta	1 cup zucchini	1 tbsp butter

DINNER (choose 1 food from each column to build your meal)

Protein	Grain	Vegetable(s)	Add-on
4-6 oz chicken breast	1 cup brown rice	Green Beans	1 tbsp olive oil
4-6 oz salmon	1 cup whole wheat pasta	Zucchini	1 tbsp canola oil
½ cup black beans	1 cup cooked quinoa	Red pepper and onions	1 tbsp olive oil
4-6 oz beef	1 baked potato	Broccoli and carrots	1 tbsp butter
Turkey burger made with 3-4 oz ground turkey	1 hamburger bun	Romaine lettuce	1-2 tbsp salad dressing

SNACKS

Be sure to include at least 2-3 snacks into your diet each day to be sure that you are getting enough calories and keeping your energy levels high. When snacking, be sure to combine a carbohydrate and protein-rich food from the list below for the perfect power snack.

Carbohydrate-rich foods

- ¼ cup Dried fruit
- 4 cups popcorn
- 1 whole wheat bagel
- 15-20 whole wheat crackers
- 1 piece fresh fruit

Protein-rich foods

- ¼ cup Almonds
- 1 piece string cheese
- 2 tbsp peanut butter
- Hummus
- 2 tbsp almond butter

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question #1: I have cancer. What should I eat?

There is no specific diet for when you are undergoing cancer treatment. However, the main nutritional goals during treatment include getting enough:

- Calories (energy) and nutrients from healthy foods
- Protein to help maintain lean body mass and muscle mass
- Fluids to remain hydrated

You can still follow a normal, healthy diet while undergoing cancer treatment that includes fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. The main thing to remember is that EVERY patient is different and what works for some may not work for others as different people experience different symptoms and side effects.

Question #2 : Does sugar feed cancer?

Many people have heard the statement “sugar feeds cancer” and feel that they need to completely avoid all sugar in order to no longer “feed” the cancer cells. However, it is important that we understand how sugar is made in our bodies and what it is used for.

Our bodies need sugar (specifically glucose) in order to have energy. EVERY cell of our body needs sugar to live. The sugar that we need comes from both the carbohydrate that we eat and from our body. Our body will make it's own sugar if we don't get enough from our food!

If all sugar is removed from the diet, the body will then make that sugar that it needs from fat and protein. This requires more energy and can make the body more stressed.

Bottom line: We need some carbohydrates in order to have healthy cell function in our bodies. Cancer cells use sugar for energy just like any other cell. We cannot “choose” which cells are fed just by avoiding sugar. For those who are undergoing treatment for cancer, it is vital to feed your healthy cells by providing them with adequate amounts of carbohydrates, fats, and protein. Avoiding sugar altogether will NOT help treatment and could leave your healthy cells low on the energy that they need!

At this point, there is no conclusive research showing us that eliminating dietary sources of carbohydrate and sugar results in slower cancer growth but instead, severe carbohydrate restriction causes the body to work harder than usual to make the glucose that it needs.

Question #3: Do I have to buy organic produce?

The short answer is NO! There is so much hype around “buying organic” and the “dirty dozen,” however, the truth is that it is better to be consuming more produce overall than to be concerned about organic vs. non-organic. The bottom line is that the health benefits of consuming more fruits and vegetables overall outweighs the potential risk of pesticide exposure from some non-organic produce. You would have to eat TONS of certain fruits or vegetables to even begin to experience adverse health reactions. For example, you would have to consume 18,100 servings of carrots in one day without any effect even if the carrots have the highest pesticide residue recorded for carrots by the USDA (source: The Alliance for Food and Farming).

References:

1. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Oncology Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group. “Sugar and Cancer.” July 2014. <https://www.oncologynutrition.org/erfc/healthy-nutrition-now/sugar-and-cancer/>
2. The Alliance for Food and Farming. “Pesticide Residue Calculator.” <http://safefruitsandveggies.com/pesticide-calculator>

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