

Staying Healthy

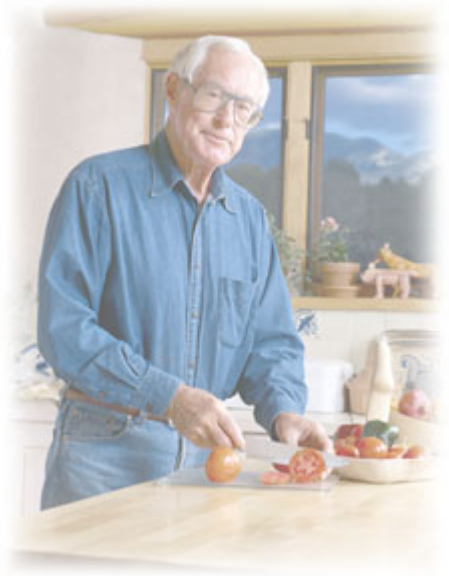
Snack; exercise; socialize

When cancer strikes, patients and families often feel helpless and out of control. But there are steps you can take to nourish your body and spirit during this physically and emotionally stressful time.

Healthy eating and adequate exercise are two of those steps. While it's important for all of us to eat right and exercise, these two simple acts assume an even greater value when you are diagnosed with cancer.

There may be days when you just can't eat because of nausea, mouth and throat irritation or depression. The following tips may help.

- Eat small meals or snacks whenever you want—not necessarily at "meal time."
- Vary your diet, try new foods and change your meal routine. Try eating by candlelight or in a different location.
- Take a walk before meals to stimulate your appetite.
- Eat with friends or family members. When eating alone, watch television or listen to the radio.
- Arrange for Meals on Wheels or a similar program to bring food to you. Ask your doctor, nurse or the local American Cancer Society about such services.



Some people become constipated from chemotherapy. To deal with this problem, drink plenty of fluids, especially warm and hot beverages and eat a lot of high-fiber foods (bran, vegetables and fruits, nuts and popcorn).

Exercise also aids in relieving constipation, and generally will help you feel better, physically and mentally. Exercise can also help alleviate fatigue, which is a common complaint of persons undergoing cancer treatments. The amount and type of exercise that is best for you will depend on your physical condition before treatment. The optimal amount of exercise for people undergoing cancer therapy might be something as simple as just stretching the muscles. Begin exercising under the guidance of a good exercise therapist or physiologist.

Exercise also will help prevent osteoporosis—the bone-deteriorating disease—that is common after undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Studies show that 80 percent of breast cancer survivors have some degree of bone loss after treatment as well as reduced muscle strength. A regular program of strengthening and weight training (along with calcium and vitamin D supplements, and bone-restoring medications such as Fosamax) can help reverse bone loss. Such exercises would include lifting small hand weights or using exercise machines.