

Caring For Your Nutrition: Get the Facts

When your body does not get the right balance of energy and nutrients that it needs, you may become malnourished. **Malnutrition** is in this case considered undernutrition. **Malnutrition threatens your health and your ability to fight sickness and injuries.**

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Malnutrition is not always easy to see, so it is important to keep an eye out for possible signs that you may be malnourished. The major signs of malnutrition include:

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|  <p>Sudden unexpected weight loss</p> |  <p>Loss of appetite</p> |  <p>Muscle weakness</p> |  <p>Frequent nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea</p> |
|  <p>Slow-healing wounds</p> |  <p>Feeling tired or fatigued</p> |  <p>Swelling in your ankles, legs, or belly</p> |  <p>Getting sick often</p> |

WHY IT MATTERS

Malnutrition is a serious issue that can have dangerous consequences on your well-being. The effects of malnutrition in cancer patients include:

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|  <p>Loss of weight and muscle</p> |  <p>Higher risk of infections</p> |  <p>Higher risk of bone fractures</p> |
|  <p>Higher stress levels</p> |  <p>Higher risk of bad side effects to cancer treatment</p> |  <p>Less independence</p> |
|  <p>Longer and more frequent hospital stays</p> |  <p>Higher death risk</p> |  <p>Higher healthcare costs</p> |

Cancer patients are at a higher risk of malnutrition. In fact, the rate of malnutrition among cancer patients is reported up to 80%.¹

Malnutrition is most common among patients with gastrointestinal tract, head and neck, and liver and lung cancers.

It is also more common among those of older age and those with cancer at more advanced stages.

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¹ Trujillo EB et al. Closing the gap in nutrition care at outpatient cancer centers: ongoing initiatives of the Oncology Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group. *J Acad Nutr Diet*, 2018; 118(4): 749-760

WHAT CAN YOU DO? TIPS FOR GOOD NUTRITION

Signs of malnutrition often go unnoticed, so it is important for you to be able to look out for your health and prevent malnutrition. The strategies that might work best for you will depend on many individual factors, including your age, cancer type, and cancer stage. Speak with your healthcare provider before making any changes.

- i** If you have a low appetite, try eating foods that are high in **protein and calories**. Examples of protein-rich foods include **chicken, fish, meat, beans, yogurt, and eggs**. Consider using **protein-fortified milk, smoothies, or milkshakes** to get in more protein and calories when you do not feel like eating solid foods.



- i** Build muscle by **lifting weights, using resistance bands, or doing body weight exercises like squats or push-ups**.



- i** If you struggle with nausea, eat foods that are **bland, soft, and easy to digest**. Examples include white bread, plain yogurt, and applesauce. Eat **5 or 6 small meals** a day instead of 3 large ones.



- i** If you have a sore throat or trouble swallowing, eat soft foods like **milkshakes, scrambled eggs, and oatmeal**. Try moistening your food by adding **gravy, sauces, broth, or yogurt**.



- i** Find an **oral nutrition supplement** that you like. Oral nutrition supplements are an easy way to get in the **calories, protein, and essential nutrients** that your body needs. Look for oral nutrition supplements that provide **at least 150 calories and 15-30 grams of protein per 8 ounces**. Oral nutrition supplements can be purchased at the grocery store, pharmacy, or ordered online from various manufacturers.

You can also prepare your own shake or smoothie. The following is an example of such a recipe that is high in calories and protein.



Creamy Peach Smoothie

1 Cup vanilla ice cream

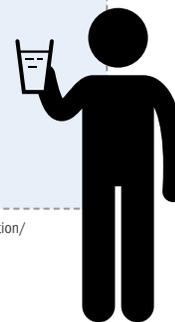
½ Cup whole milk

1 Peach

Calories: 435

Protein: 11 g

Carbohydrates: 51 g



Recipe from <http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/Nutrition/HighCalorieShakeandSmoothieRecipes.pdf>

If you think you might be malnourished, speak with your healthcare provider. They can perform a nutrition screening and provide suggestions to help you as needed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about malnutrition and what you can do to fight it by visiting the ASPEN Malnutrition Solution Center at nutritioncare.org/malnutrition.