

Cancer Wellness During Treatment:

Personal action plan

Date: _____

The most important thing you can do to manage your health during cancer treatment is to eat right for your condition and practice healthy lifestyle behaviors.

Eating healthy during treatment

Good nutrition is key to your recovery and quality of life. There are many ways that cancer and cancer treatments can impact your ability to get the nutrition you need during treatment. For many, treatments can work better if you are well nourished.

During cancer treatment, you may find that you don't have much appetite and that foods don't taste or smell very good. You may have trouble chewing and swallowing some foods or need to be on a **neutropenic** [nu-tro-PEE-nik] diet if you have a weakened immune system. Sometimes, treatments make it harder for your body to digest what you eat.

Talk with your doctor about working with a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) who specializes in cancer care nutrition. Together, an RDN and your doctor can help you:

- Understand how eating habits best for you during treatment may be different than normal healthy eating guidelines.
- Establish a healthy eating plan and keep track of what you are eating.
- Get enough protein and calories to heal, fight infection, and maintain your strength.
- Manage your weight by focusing on smaller portion sizes, changing snacking habits, and limiting how often you eat out.
- Avoid supplements unless your doctor recommends taking them for other conditions.

My personal action plan

Focus on just 1 or 2 of the following each week:

- Follow a healthy eating plan (see [page 2](#)).
- Manage my weight (see [page 3](#)).
- Get regular exercise (see [page 3](#)).
- Make healthy lifestyle changes (see [page 4](#)).
- Complete an advance directive. Ask your healthcare provider for a copy of Intermountain's [Advance Care Planning](#) booklet.

Making lifestyle changes

Lifestyle changes can make a big difference in how you feel during treatment as well as your ability to survive and recover from cancer.

Maintaining a healthy weight should be a priority. If you are underweight, you will need to gain weight to keep up your strength. If you are overweight, shedding some weight can reduce your risk of other health problems, treatment side effects, cancer recurring, and even death.

Exercise is important for your health and quality of life. Besides helping you manage your weight, engaging in physical activity can help you feel less tired—a key side effect of treatment—and protect your heart and bones. Exercise also helps fight off feelings of depression. Research tells us that moderate exercise can help cancer patients.

Adopting healthy habits can also help you recover. Make healthy changes, such as quitting smoking, limiting alcohol, getting enough sleep, seeing your dentist regularly, using sunscreen, and reducing stress.

My personal action plan for cancer wellness during treatment

From the categories below and on the next few pages, pick 1 or 2 actions to focus on to better care for yourself during your treatment. You can make copies of this plan to use throughout the course of treatment. Share your plan with your cancer care team so they can offer more insights from current research, help you make changes, and connect you with other specialists as needed.

Follow a healthy EATING PLAN

Follow a good nutrition program during treatment by eating a plant-based diet with most of your food being vegetables, fruit, and whole grains. Limit the amount of refined sugar as well as red or processed meat you eat. Plan to get all the nutrients you need from your diet since vitamins and supplements may not be recommended by your doctor unless needed for other conditions.

To adopt a more healthy diet, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Focus on eating a plant-based diet				
Limit fats to olive or canola oil, avocados, seeds and nuts, fatty fish				
Get my carbohydrates from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans or peas)				
Get my protein from poultry, fish, legumes, low-fat dairy foods, nuts				
Limit soy and soy products to no more than 3 servings a day*				
Keep a food journal to help me track calories and nutrients in my diet				
Limit alcohol to 2 drinks per day (for men) and only 1 drink per day (for women)				
To eat more fruits and vegetables, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Fill half my plate with vegetables and fruits				
Snack on vegetables and fruits, not chips and candy				
Buy pre-washed, pre-cut vegetables for quick meals and snacks				
Eat more dark green and leafy vegetables, such as spinach, kale, and broccoli				
Eat more bright yellow, orange, and other colorful vegetables and fruits, such as sweet potatoes, carrots, squash, sweet red peppers, dried apricots				
Choose whole fruits more often than juices				
To eat more whole grains, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Switch to whole-grain bread, rice, or tortillas				
For breakfast, eat oatmeal or cold cereals with a whole grain listed first				
Make sure at least half my grains are whole grains				
To eat more healthy proteins, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Eat fish or shellfish 2 or 3 times a week				
When eating chicken or turkey, choose skinless white meat				
Add legumes or nuts to meatless meals				
<input type="checkbox"/> Possible problems for meeting my healthy eating goals: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Things that will help me meet my healthy eating goals: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> My friends, family, or cancer care team can help me meet my healthy eating goals by: _____				

*Research has not shown that soy plays a role in controlling cancer.

Manage my WEIGHT

Talk with your doctor about treatment effects on your weight and what a healthy weight should be for you during treatment and beyond. If overweight, avoid using weight-loss supplements, and focus on changing behaviors to lose and keep extra pounds off. If underweight, work with your doctor or dietitian to get the calories and nutrients you need.

To keep track of my weight I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Weigh myself at least once a week and keep track of it in a journal.				
Read food labels for portion size, calories, and protein.				
Track my progress toward reaching and maintaining my target weight.				
Track my diet, calories, fatigue, and physical activity.				

Possible problems for meeting my weight management goals: _____

Things that will help me meet my weight management goals: _____

Get regular EXERCISE — See safety tips below

To increase my physical activity, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Get my doctor's approval before starting an exercise program.				
Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise each week (at least 30 minutes each day for 5 days during the week).				
Go to an exercise class or do strength training with a partner or caregiver at a gym or senior center.				
Look for exercise specialists and programs designed for cancer patients.				
Do 2 to 3 sessions each week of strength training, focusing on major muscle groups and different joints to improve endurance and prevent injury.				
Avoid sitting for long periods. Walk and take the stairs when possible.				
Stretch major muscle groups routinely, especially before and after exercise.				
Wear a pedometer or fitness tracker to monitor activity.				

Possible problems for meeting my activity goals: _____

Things that will help me meet my activity goals: _____

My friends, family, or cancer care team can help me meet my activity goal by: _____

Safety tips for exercise during treatment:

With your doctor's or physical therapist's approval, try to start an exercise routine before you start treatment. Make sure that it will be safe and easy to follow once treatment begins.

- If you don't have enough energy for 30 minutes of exercise in a day, try taking 3 walks that day for 10 minutes each.
- Check with your doctor before going swimming. Swimming pools can expose you to infections, and chlorine in the water can irritate skin where you are getting radiation.
- Wear compression garments when doing resistance training if you have or are at risk for swelling in your arms or legs.
- As part of your exercise program, you should check your temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing regularly. If doing moderate-to-vigorous exercise, check your blood pressure and heart rate before, during, and after exercise to make sure you are exercising safely.
- Listen to your body. Don't exercise if you are not feeling well or running a fever.

Make healthy LIFESTYLE CHANGES

To manage distress and anxiety, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Try a daily meditation practice.				
Explore creative therapies (art, dance, music).				
Access spiritual support or counseling.				
Complete and store legal documents in a safe, accessible place (advance directive, living will, durable power of attorney).				
Document side effects you experience so your care team can help manage them.				
To quit smoking, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)				
Identify a support program or team (Quit.org).				
Talk with my doctor about medicines that will help me succeed.				
Set a quit date.				
To practice healthy sleep habits, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)*				
Keep a regular schedule for going to bed and waking up.				
If an inpatient, ask hospital caregivers to plan for the least disruptions during the night.				
Consider massage therapy to ease stress and pain for better sleep.				
Practice relaxation techniques as part of a bedtime routine.				
Ask your doctor if sleep medicines would help for a short time.				
To practice sun safety, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)				
Wear water-resistant sunscreen that has an SPF of 30 or higher and avoid tanning beds.				
Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours or after swimming or excessive sweating.				
Wear hats and shirts with sleeves, and avoid the sun during peak hours.				

- Possible problems for meeting my lifestyle goals: _____
- Things that will help me meet my lifestyle goals: _____
- My friends, family, or cancer care team can help me meet my lifestyle goal by: _____

*Certain drugs or treatments may impact your sleep. Being well rested can improve energy and help you cope better with cancer and treatment side effects. Sleep problems that last for a long time may increase your risk for anxiety and depression.

When should I call my doctor?

If you experience any of the these during or after exercise, stop and call your doctor:

- Feeling dizzy or disoriented, blurry vision, fainting, or a severe headache
- Sudden nausea or vomiting
- Unusual or sudden shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat, palpitations, chest pain
- Leg or calf pain, bone pain, unusual joint pain, or pain not caused by injury
- Muscle cramps, sudden muscle weakness or fatigue

Where can I learn more?

These online resources provide helpful information:

- intermountainhealthcare.org/patienthandouts
- nccn.org/patients/guidelines/cancers.aspx
- cancer.gov
- aicr.org/new-american-plate/reduce_diet_new_american_plate_portion
- cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy/find-healthy-recipes/main-dishes
- choosemyplate.gov

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