

# Cancer Wellness After Treatment:

## Personal action plan

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Research tells us that the best way to improve your quality of life and keep from getting cancer again is good nutrition combined with weight control and exercise.

### Eating healthy after treatment

**Good nutrition is key to your recovery and quality of life.** There are many ways that cancer treatments can impact your life long after it ends. Long-lasting side effects (called “late effects”) can include obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, fatigue, physical dysfunction, mental health issues, and a higher risk of getting other cancers.

Research shows that diet can reduce these late-effect risks. For example, we know that:

- A plant-based diet reduces your overall risk of cancer.
- A healthy diet helps prevent late effects.
- Limiting red meat in your diet reduces the risk of inflammation, which is believed to stimulate cancer tumor growth.
- Plant foods containing **antioxidants** [an-tee-OCK-si-dehnts] and vitamins A, C, and E. Antioxidants prevent damage to healthy cells, aging, and disease.
- **Phytochemicals** [FIE-tuh-kem-i-kuhls] in fruit, vegetables, legumes, and grains, may help cells fight off cancer.
- Most vitamins and other dietary supplements do not control or prevent cancer. Some high-dose supplements may actually increase cancer risk. However, **vitamin D** may prevent some cancers, decrease the risk of recurrence, and improve chances of survival.

Talk with your doctor about continuing to work with a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) who specializes in cancer care nutrition after treatment.

### 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](#)).

### Making lifestyle changes

Following cancer lifestyle prevention guidelines decreases your risk of having late effects at all or for having more severe late effects.

**Maintaining a healthy weight.** If you are underweight, maximize calories and protein to regain strength. If you are overweight, losing can reduce your risk of late effects, cancer recurring, and even death.

**Create and follow a post-treatment exercise routine.** Besides helping you manage your weight, engaging in physical activity can help you regain energy and protect your heart and bones. Exercise also helps fight off feelings of depression. Talk to your doctor about specific physical activity and exercises for your abilities and preferences.

**Adopt healthy habits to recover faster and prevent illness.** Take steps to quit smoking, limit alcohol, get enough sleep, see your dentist regularly, use sunscreen, and reduce stress.

### Organic or not?

Research on the nutritional benefits of organic fruits and vegetables is mixed. There are no studies about whether or not organic produce is better at preventing cancer or cancer recurrence than non-organic produce.

## My personal action plan for cancer wellness after treatment

From the categories below and on the next few pages, pick 1 or 2 actions to focus on to better care for yourself each week after treatment ends. You can make copies of this plan to use in the months ahead. Share your plan with your primary care team so they can help you make changes and connect you with additional specialists as needed.

### Follow a healthy EATING PLAN

Follow a good nutrition program after 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.

<b>To adopt a more healthy diet, I will:</b> (pick 1 or 2 for each week)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Focus on eating a plant-based diet.				
Try to 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 track calories and nutrients in my diet.				
Limit alcohol to 2 drinks per day (for men) and only 1 drink per day (for women).				

<b>To eat more fruits and vegetables, I will:</b> (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.				

<b>To eat more whole grains, I will:</b> (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.				

<b>To eat more healthy proteins, I will:</b> (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.				

- Possible problems for meeting my lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_
- Things that will help me meet my lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_
- My friends, family, and healthcare team can help me meet my lifestyle goals by: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Manage my WEIGHT

Ask your doctor what a healthy weight should be for you now that treatment has ended. 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 lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_

Things that will help me meet my lifestyle 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 to make sure it is safe.				
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 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 lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_

Things that will help me meet my lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_

My friends, family, and healthcare team can help me meet my lifestyle goals by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Safety tips for exercise

With your doctor's or physical therapist's approval, follow an exercise routine that will be safe and easy to stick with.

- 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.
- 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 have your temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing monitored regularly.
- Listen to your body. Don't exercise if you are not feeling well or running a fever.

### When should I call my doctor?

Stop exercise and call your doctor if you experience any of the these during or after exercise:

- 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

## 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
Include 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.				
Use 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 sun during peak hours.				
To plan for my post-treatment life, I will: (pick 1 or 2 for each week)				
Ask my healthcare providers for a treatment summary and related medical records to keep in a central location for reference.				
Get a Survivorship Care Plan from my cancer care team and have the regular follow-up medical care recommended by my oncologist and primary care doctor.				
Work with a counselor to transition back to activities with family, friends, work, and community involvement. Your ideas about what is important for a fulfilling and engaging life may have changed over time.				

- Possible problems for meeting my lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_
- Things that will help me meet my lifestyle goals: \_\_\_\_\_
- My friends, family, and healthcare team can help me meet my lifestyle goals by: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Sleep problems that last for a long time may increase your risk for anxiety and depression.

### Where can I learn more?

These online resources provide helpful information:

- [intermountainhealthcare.org/patienthandouts](http://intermountainhealthcare.org/patienthandouts)
- [cancer.gov](http://cancer.gov)
- [cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy/find-healthy-recipes/main-dishes](http://cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy/find-healthy-recipes/main-dishes)
- [nccn.org/patients/guidelines/cancers.aspx](http://nccn.org/patients/guidelines/cancers.aspx)
- [aicr.org/new-american-plate/reduce-diet-new-american-plate-portion](http://aicr.org/new-american-plate/reduce-diet-new-american-plate-portion)
- [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)

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