

Weight Loss

Why am I losing weight?

About half of all cancer patients experience weight loss from the disease itself or its treatment. In fact, weight loss is one of the most common symptoms that may prompt a diagnosis of many cancers. In addition, patients receiving chemotherapy can experience weight loss due to nausea, vomiting, appetite changes, dehydration, or diarrhea. Whatever the reason, it is important to keep track of your weight. If you lose more than 5 pounds in 1 week, or if you feel dizzy or short of breath, call your doctor or nurse.

What are the dangers of excessive weight loss?

Excessive weight loss can leave you weak, more prone to infections, unable to carry out your daily activities, and can affect your quality of life. If left unchecked, it can lead to the development of cachexia (kah-KECK-see-ah), which is the “wasting away” often seen in cancer, when the body is starved for protein.

How can I help keep my weight loss under control?

- Make sure your diet includes enough calories to maintain your weight and enough protein to rebuild lost or weakened tissue

As a guideline:

- Eat at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruits every day
- Choose whole grains instead of processed (refined) grains and sugars
- Choose high-protein foods such as lean meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, nuts, dried beans, peas and lentils, and soy foods
- Avoid eating too much red meat, as well as high-fat and processed meats (such as cold cuts)
- For days when you cannot tolerate solid food, keep a supply of high-protein beverages on hand. They can be found in most pharmacies and supermarkets
- Drink plenty of water or other non-caffeinated liquids every day. Juice, soup, and other fluids can provide important nutrition and can often be tolerated even when you do not feel like eating
- If nausea, vomiting, or other side effects from chemotherapy affect your usual eating habits, tell your doctor or nurse. They may recommend medications, changes in diet, or other strategies to help you get back on track

Name: _____

Institution/Group: _____

Phone: _____

Notes: _____

*If you are concerned with your weight loss, talk to your doctor or nurse.
Eat Well. Eat Right.*

- *You'll feel better*
- *You'll cope better with side effects*
- *You'll stay stronger*
- *You'll cut your risk of infection*

The information contained herein is not comprehensive and is intended only as a guide.