



FACT SHEET

Diet and Brain Tumours

Healthy Eating - WHY?

Eating well is important to maintain good health. It also helps to:

- Obtain the most benefit from your treatment and better manage the side-effects.
- Improve your immune system and ability to fight infection.

Healthy, Well Balanced Eating

Eat a wide variety of foods from each of the food groups everyday:

- Fruit and Vegetables
- Bread and Cereals
- Milk and Dairy Foods
- Meat and Alternatives
- Fats and Oils

Fluids

You should aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid daily:

- Fluid requirements often increase with treatment.
- If you are underweight or losing weight, make sure to have 'nourishing' fluids.
- Can also assist with bowel function, energy levels and mouth comfort.

Unproven Diets - BEWARE

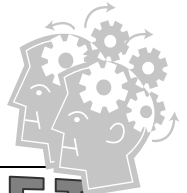
Before commencing an unproven diet, you should consider:

- Are there foods from each of the food groups?
- Can you stay healthy while on the diet?
- Does the diet interfere with treatment?
- Is the dose of vitamins and minerals toxic?
- Are the results realistic?
- What are the costs?

Poor Appetite

A common effect of cancer and treatment:

- Try not to miss meals, eat small amounts every 2-3 hours.
- Change your usual meal pattern if needed.
- Choose 'nourishing' foods and fluids and use 'extras' to boost nourishment of these.
- Small amounts of exercise or alcohol before meals may assist.



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Nausea and Vomiting

Can be caused by your illness or treatment. Anxiety & stress can also contribute:

- Always take anti-nausea medications as prescribed.
- Constipation can make nausea worse.
- See your Doctor if vomiting continues over 24 hours.

Changes in Taste or Smell

This can happen because of chemotherapy or radiation, or the cancer itself:

- Experiment with different flavourings.
- Use salt, lemon juice or coffee powder if foods taste too sweet.
- Use sugar or honey if food tastes metallic or too salty.
- Use a drinking straw to bypass taste buds. Try using plastic utensils, cups etc.
- Choose cold foods or food without a strong smell.
- Stay away from the kitchen if possible when food is being prepared.
- Cook your meal in advance and microwave it later when ready to eat.
- Try frozen/precooked meals.

Dry and/or Sore Mouth & Throat

Cancer treatments can cause mouth ulcers or change the saliva in your mouth:

- Regular mouth care is essential and will help prevent infections – use bicarbonate/salt rinses at least 4 times daily.
- Avoid foods that may irritate or sting the mouth.
- Add moisture to foods eg. extra gravy, sauces.
- Change the texture of foods eg. minced meats.

Texture Modified Diets & Thickened Fluids

Some people may need to try minced or pureed foods. Thickened fluids may be required.

- Most foods can be modified to improve tolerance – eg. meats: marinated, casseroles; fruits/vegetables: peeling off tough skins.
- If there are signs of aspiration (foods/fluids going into wind-pipe/lungs) this is when the Speech Pathologist needs to be involved.

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Bowel Function

Many treatments upset usual bowel habits:

- Closely monitor bowel function and report any significant changes to your Doctor, Dietitian or Nurse.
- There are many medications available specifically to assist bowel function during cancer treatment. Speak to your Doctor about these.
- Adequate fluids and fibre in your diet will assist.
- Probiotics ('good bacteria') may be beneficial.
- No bowel motion for 3 or more days needs attention.

Food Safety - Preventing Infections

Cancer and treatment weaken the immune system, making food handling and preparation very important:

- Wash hands before eating and preparing food.
- Wash fruits and vegetables carefully.
- Use special care in handling raw meats, chicken and fish.
- Refrigerate left-over's immediately (don't let it cool).
- Thaw frozen food in the fridge and do not re-freeze foods.
- Ensure foods are heated through thoroughly.

**If you have any further
questions, please contact the
Dietitian at the Cancer Therapy
Centre on (02) 9828 5293**