

Nutrition and diet advice for people with Pancreatic Cancer

Department of Dietetics & Nutrition
Information for patients

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Introduction

People with pancreatic cancer often experience a range of symptoms that cause problems with eating and digesting food, some of which may include:

- A reduced appetite
- Weight loss
- Taste changes
- Feeling sick
- Vomiting
- Changes in your bowel habits
- Feeling of fullness
- Feeling tired and lacking energy
- Bloating and increased wind
- Indigestion or heartburn
- Dry mouth

This leaflet aims to provide advice on how to manage these symptoms, in turn improving your nutrition, energy levels and overall wellbeing. Being better nourished may also help with your treatment, which may include chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery.

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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Eating little and often

Eat little and often, grazing every 2-3 hours.

- Try to eat three small meals and three snacks a day - little and often is best.
- Use a smaller plate to eat off as some people find larger plate of food overwhelms them.
- Keep snacks handy to nibble whenever you can.
- Everyone's appetite changes and you may have good and bad days. Make the most of the good days by eating well and treating yourself to your favourite foods.

Below are some examples of the snacks to have between meals

Crisps	Full fat mousse
Nuts and seeds	Scone with butter and jam
Crackers and cheese,	Bagel with cream cheese
Hummus or dips and bread sticks/ cheese	Bhajis
straws	Spring rolls
Pakorras	Croissants
Spring rolls	Muffins
Fruit and full fat yoghurt/ custard or milk jelly	Bombay mix
Biscuits, cakes, fun sized chocolate bars	Crisps
Trifle	Scotch egg
Sausage roll	Malt loaf
Crème caramel	Full fat rice pudding
Glass of milk	Halva
Toast with peanut butter	Crumpets
	Cold meats

Fortifying your food

One way to gain weight is to eat foods that are high in energy and protein. Fortifying your food refers to using everyday foods as a way of increasing the amount of calories that you eat. The table below shows how this can be done.

Ways to increase energy and protein in your diet

Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can increase the protein in milk by adding 3-4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to one pint of full fat milk - this is called fortified milk. This can then be used in drinks, on cereals, puddings, soups or in sauces Fruit smoothies or milkshakes made with fresh or frozen fruit and natural yogurt, add honey, syrup, ice cream Hot chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlicks, Build Up Shakes made with milk
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Omelettes, scrambled egg made with full cream milk Add butter and cheese
Mashed Potato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add double cream, crème fraiche, butter or margarine, use mashed potato to make potato cakes, you can add flaked fish, lentils etc.
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add butter or margarine, grated cheese or cream cheese and serve with a savoury sauce e.g. cauliflower cheese.
Toast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be generous with butter/margarine, peanut butter, cream cheese, pate Serve with beans, cheese or egg
Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use creamy sauces to crumbles, pies and casseroles Add beans or pulses to casseroles
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve with a creamy sauce Add mayonnaise to tinned tuna Choose fish in oil rather than brine Fry fish to add extra calories
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make with fortified milk and add extra butter, margarine, double cream or evaporated milk. Choose 'cream of' varieties
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use fortified milk to make custard or milk puddings then add sweeteners or buy sugar-free puddings and add cream Try scones, tea-cakes, crumpets or tea-bread. Add butter, reduced sugar jam and cream Have fruit pies, pastries or crumble (use sweetener to taste) with cream, evaporated milk or custard Yogurts or fromage frais Milk puddings - home-made, canned or in pots

Nourishing drinks

If you do not feel like eating solid foods and find that you are managing liquids better than solids, try drinking the below high calorie suggestions between your meals rather than with meals as they can fill you up.

- ◆ Hot chocolate
- ◆ Nesquick
- ◆ Horlicks
- ◆ Ovaltine
- ◆ Full fat milkshakes
- ◆ Yoghurt drinks
- ◆ Fruit smoothies

Fortified milk

You can make fortified milk by adding 2-4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to a pint (570mls) of full fat milk.

Use this instead of ordinary milk in tea, coffee, cereals, porridge, soups, mashed potato and milk-based puddings. • Add sugar, jam or honey to cereal, porridge, puddings and hot drinks.

Powdered drinks

Some powdered drink supplements are available over the counter from your chemist or some supermarkets. These can be mixed with fortified milk for extra calories and protein: examples are Complan® and Meritene®.

Nutritional Supplements

Sometimes the suggestions on the previous page are not enough to result in weight gain or to keep your weight stable. Therefore the dietitian, doctor or specialist nurse may recommend the use of nutritional supplements. There are many varieties available to try, including milk-based, juice-flavoured, powder, yoghurt style and soups. You may need to try different products until you find the one you prefer.

A sample meal plan

Breakfast	Porridge made with fortified milk Toast with extra butter / margarine, add extra peanut butter, jam or honey Yogurt with nuts, seeds and dried fruit Fruit smoothie (made with fruit of your choice, fortified milk , fruit juice, ice cream or yogurt)
Mid-morning	Coffee or tea with fortified milk Choice of scone, crumpet or muffin with butter, jam
Lunch	Jacket potato with cheese and beans Macaroni cheese made with fortified milk , add extra cream Cream of variety soup, bread and butter Rice pudding / fruit and yogurt for dessert
Mid-afternoon	Packet of crisps Cheese and crackers Milkshake made with whole milk Hummus and vegetable sticks
Main meal	Fish in creamy sauce, mashed potatoes and buttered vegetables Lentil and chick pea curry with extra cream, with rice Fruit crumble with full fat custard
Supper	Toast with pate, cheese and / or beans Biscuits with a milky drink using fortified milk Bowl of cereal with fortified milk

Tips for coping with a dry mouth

- Some treatments for pancreatic cancer can cause a dry mouth. You may find these tips helpful.
- Sip drinks frequently.
- Suck ice cubes or ice lollies.
- Suck sweets or mints, or chew sugar-free chewing gum to increase saliva.
- Make your food moist with sauces, gravy, custard or cream.
- Keep your mouth clean. Brushing your teeth before and after meals might help.
- Use mouthwash regularly. If you have a sore mouth, ask your nurse or dietitian which is the best mouth-wash to use.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine and smoking.

Managing taste changes

There are many reasons why you may be experiencing taste changes; this can be frustrating if you already have a poor appetite and your favourite foods no longer taste the same. Below are some suggestions that may help.

- Eat the foods that you enjoy the taste of and avoid those that you do not. However it is important to retry the 'problem' foods again in a few weeks as your taste may have changed again.
- Use stronger seasoning to add flavour to savoury foods, for example mustard, herbs, pepper, chilli, garlic
- Add flavourings to pudding, for example nutmeg into rice pudding or custard, ginger and cinnamon to fruit pots and yogurts.
- Marinating meat, chicken or fish prior to cooking may improve the flavour and tenderise the meat. Ideas for marinating include sweet and sour sauce, barbeque, soy sauce or wine.
- If you are struggling to eat red meat, other good sources of protein include turkey, chicken, fish, cheese, pulses, lentils and milk.
- Try adding pesto, garlic or sun dried tomatoes to pasta dishes.
- Sharp tasting foods and fluids such as cranberry, lemon or lime may help to stimulate your taste buds and can potentially get rid of any unpleasant tastes in your mouth.
- If tea and coffee tastes odd, try milky drinks, fizzy drinks or tangy fruit juices.
- Try flavoured stock to add flavour to rice dishes.
- It is important that you maintain good oral hygiene. Brush your teeth regularly and if you are able, use the toothbrush to brush your tongue. This may in turn help food to taste better.

Dealing with nausea and vomiting

- If you feel sick first thing in the morning then try some unbuttered toast, plain biscuits or crackers.
- Try to graze on foods, eating little and often over the course of the day.
- Try keep away from strong cooking smells as this can bring on nausea.
- Have foods that do not take much cooking, such as microwaveable meals, cold dishes and sandwiches.
- Try drinks or food containing ginger, such as ginger biscuits.
- Give your body time to digest the food, eat food slowly and sit upright after eating.
- Sometimes oily and greasy foods may increase nausea. If this is the case, try grilled, boiled or baked food instead.
- Have drinks at a drinks at a different time from your meal.

If the nausea does not settle, your doctor can prescribe anti-sickness tablets. If one type of medication does not work it can help to try a different type or a combination of drugs. Your doctor will be able to give you more information on this.

Managing a change in your bowels

One of the roles of the pancreas is to help you to digest your food. It produces important digestive enzymes that help you break down the food you eat, so that the nutrients can be absorbed in your small intestine and used by the body. Having pancreatic cancer can affect how well the pancreas produces these enzymes, therefore the food may pass through your digestive system without being broken down and absorbed. This is known as **malabsorption**.

The following symptoms can be a sign that you are not producing enough digestive enzymes:

- Unintentional weight loss despite eating well
- Pale, orange, yellow-coloured stools
- Foul smelling stools
- Loose stools, and the need to pass stools urgently
- Oily stools
- Bloating
- Wind and cramping

It is important that if you are experiencing any of these symptoms you contact your doctor, dietitian or specialist nurse to let them know. We treat **malabsorption** by replacing the enzymes that your body is not producing effectively. This is done by prescribing medications that contain the pancreatic enzymes, which are taken with food.

Pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy

Having part of the pancreas removed during surgery, may affect the functioning of the pancreas and your ability to digest food (see section “Monitoring your bowel habits”).

If the pancreas is not producing enough enzymes to help break down the food you eat, the food will pass through your digestive system without being broken down and absorbed. This is known as malabsorption.

We treat malabsorption by replacing the enzymes that your body is not producing effectively. You will be prescribed one of the following medications following your pancreatic procedure.

- Creon®
- Nutrizym®
- Pancrex®

Your dietitian will be able to give you more information on pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy, including how, when and how many of the enzymes to take with your food and drink.

Treatments such as chemotherapy can also cause diarrhoea – your medical team can give you medicines for this.

The following tips may also help.

- Eat small meals often.
- Chew your food well and try to eat slowly.
- Drink plenty (at least two litres a day) to replace fluid you've lost, so that you don't become dehydrated.
- It can help to avoid spicy foods, alcohol, fruit juice, tea and coffee.
- Do not cut out fruit and vegetables completely as they can help to make your poo more solid.
- If you have very bad diarrhoea, you may need to replace lost salts and fluids with salty and sugary foods, isotonic sports drinks, or a rehydrating solution such as Dioralyte®.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your dietitian

Telephone number

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