

## A Diet for Liver Cancer Patients

*Liver cancer and its treatments can make eating unappealing, but it's important to maintain your weight and strength.*

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If you have **liver cancer**, eating is probably the last thing you want to do. The disease itself and its treatments can make food unappealing. However, you need to eat to maintain your weight and strength to fight the cancer.

To find a meal plan that works for you, consult with a registered dietitian. This way, you can be sure that you are eating foods that provide the most nutrition, says Russell Mark Reisner, MD, an oncologic surgeon at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Philadelphia.

### Liver Cancer: A Healthy Diet

To help maintain your weight and strength as you fight liver cancer, consider these dietary dos and don'ts:

- **Go organic.** Because the liver is responsible for detoxification, a liver cancer patient should avoid processed foods and foods that have lots of chemicals, says Heather Zwickey, PhD, director of the Helfgott Research Institute in Portland, Ore. Choose natural and organically grown foods because "you don't want your body to try to process pesticides," she says. Also, stay away from highly processed foods, such as bacon, hot dogs, and bologna. Even pasta is processed, so you might want to avoid it, too, Zwickey says.
- **Use ginger.** Those undergoing **treatment for liver cancer** often experience **nausea**. "When people have a lot of nausea, ginger is the best thing," Zwickey says. "You can buy ginger in the grocery store, cut it up and boil it and make your own tea." Bland foods, such as applesauce, crackers, toast, and bananas, also can help with nausea.
- **Think small.** Plan to consume six to eight smaller meals a day, instead of three large ones. Eat them in two- to three-hour intervals, says Andrea Frank, RD, a dietitian with Sodexo at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago. "Eating smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day," she says, "will mean your plate won't be as full and so eating won't seem as overwhelming."
- **Go lean.** Avoid fatty meats, such as beef, lamb, and pork; opt for fish, beans, or poultry. And be careful how you prepare these foods; it is much more healthy to broil, poach, or bake, instead of charbroiling or frying.

- **Supplement.** "Nutrition bars and liquid nutritional supplements are a great way to ensure you are able to meet your caloric requirements," Frank says. "Keep liquid supplements in the refrigerator so they are cold and ready to drink for better taste."
- **Don't prep.** Choose foods that are ready to eat or require little preparation so you don't have to spend your energy getting them ready, Frank says. "This might include foods such as puddings, peanut butter, tuna, cereal bars, trail mix, cheese and crackers, eggs, and frozen meals," she says.
- **Ask for help.** Let your family and friends help you with your grocery shopping and preparing your meals. Be sure they know what you like and what you feel like eating so that they are sure to include it, Frank says. They will be glad to help.
- **Pamper yourself.** "If you're feeling better, take advantage of the time and enjoy some of your favorite foods," Frank says. Look for those high in calories and protein.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Your liver is already stressed. You don't want to make it any more so.

When you are **fatigued** and tired because of your liver cancer and treatments, it may be hard to eat and maintain your weight. But a nutritious diet is important and can help you gain strength and feel better. It is best to discuss your dietary needs with a dietitian. Your oncologist can recommend one if you don't know where to start.