



# Eating Well

A practical guide for people living with leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders



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# INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been written to provide practical information about eating well, before, during and after treatment for leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma or a related blood disorder.

Some of you may have been recently diagnosed. Perhaps you have already started treatment or you are recovering after treatment. Whatever point you are at, we hope that the information contained in this booklet helps you to have a healthy and nutritious diet during this time.

There is no evidence that any specific type of food can cause or cure these cancers or disorders. There is evidence however that a healthy and nutritious diet can help your body to cope better with the effects of cancer and treatment.

It is important to talk to your treatment team before making major changes to the foods you eat, or before taking supplements (for example vitamins, minerals, protein drinks). Doctors and dieticians are the most qualified people to talk to about your special food needs.

You may not feel like reading this booklet from cover to cover. It might be more useful to look at the list of contents and read the parts that you think will be of most use at a particular point in time. We have also included some internet addresses that you might find useful. In addition, many of you will receive information about eating well from your dietician, doctor or nurses at your treating hospital.

A few recipes have been included at the end of the booklet. These provide examples of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks that you or your family can prepare. Additional recipes are also available from the Leukaemia Foundation's website [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)

Finally, we hope that you find this booklet useful and we would appreciate any feedback from you so that we can continue to serve you and your families better in the future.

## THE LEUKAEMIA FOUNDATION

The Leukaemia Foundation is the only national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the care and cure of patients and families living with leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders. Since 1975, the Foundation has been committed to improving survival for patients and providing much needed support. It does not receive direct ongoing government funding, relying instead on the continued and generous support of individuals and corporations to develop and expand its services.

The Foundation provides a range of **free** support services to patients and their carers, family and friends. This support may be offered over the telephone, face to face at home, hospital or at the Foundation's accommodation centres, depending on the geographical and individual needs. Support may include giving information, patient education seminars and programs that provide a forum for peer support and consumer representation, practical assistance, accommodation, transport and emotional support/counselling.

The Leukaemia Foundation funds leading research into better treatments and cures for leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders. Through its National Research Program, the Foundation has established the PwC Foundation Leukaemia and Lymphoma Tissue Bank and the Leukaemia Foundation Research Unit at the Queensland Institute for Medical Research.

The Foundation also funds research grants, scholarships and fellowships for talented researchers and rural health professionals.

## Support Services



*Foundation staff provide patients and their families with information and support at the Foundation's accommodation centres across Australia.*

The Leukaemia Foundation has an extensive team of cancer nurses and allied health professionals working across the country. They offer personalised support and care to you and your family right throughout the journey.

The support services provided include:

### ***Information, Education and Support***

Support is provided by telephone, office, home or hospital visits, referral to specialist services and practical assistance.

The Foundation also offers you and your family free disease-specific or general education programs and workshops on subjects such as Taking Control, Caring for the Carer, survivorship issues and grief. We also coordinate buddy or mentor programs as well as patient and family support groups.

The Leukaemia Foundation has a range of booklets such as this one that are available free of charge. These can be ordered via the form at the back of this booklet or downloaded from the website.

Translated versions (in languages other than English) of some booklets are also available online.

### ***Accommodation***

Accommodation and other housing arrangements close to hospitals are available if you have to relocate for treatment. The self-contained modern units and houses are fully furnished, providing a 'home away from home' for you and your family.

### ***Transport***

Courtesy cars and other forms of transport support are available in many areas to transport patients and carers to and from hospital for treatment.

### ***Practical Assistance***

Leukaemias, lymphomas and myeloma can affect you and your family's normal way of life and there may be practical things the Foundation can do to help. By working with you, your doctors and social workers, the Foundation can find out the best way to care for you and your family. In special circumstances, the Leukaemia Foundation provides financial support for patients who are experiencing financial difficulties.

### **Contacting us**

The Leukaemia Foundation provides services and support in every Australian state and territory. Every person's experience of living with these cancers and disorders is different. Living with leukaemias, lymphomas or myeloma is not easy, but you don't have to do it alone. Please call 1800 620 420 (Freecall) to speak to a local support service staff member or to find out more about the services offered by the Foundation. Alternatively, contact us via email by sending a message to [info@leukaemia.org.au](mailto:info@leukaemia.org.au) or visit [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)

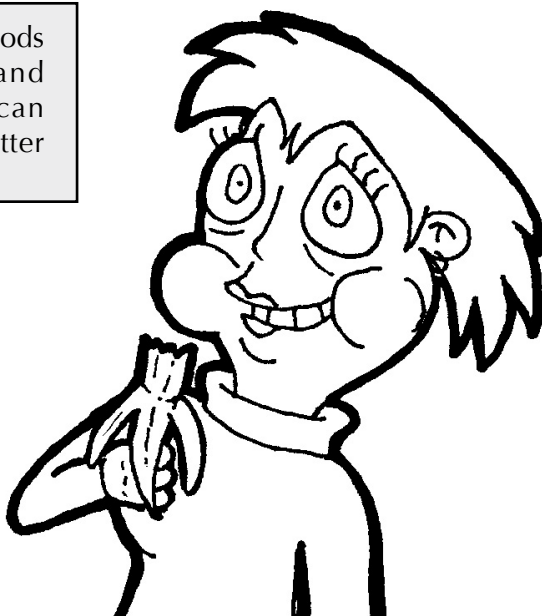
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EAT WELL?

Eating well is always important, but it is especially important if you have leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma or a related blood disorder. These diseases and their treatments place extra demands on you both physically and mentally and it is important that the food you eat provides you with the energy and nutrients necessary to help meet these demands.

There are many benefits to eating well if you have a cancer or related blood disorder. Eating well may help you to:

- cope better with the side effects of cancer and cancer treatment
- recover more quickly following treatment
- have more energy and feel less tired
- maintain your body weight
- fight infection by boosting your immune system
- repair damaged tissues, affected by treatment
- improve your sense of wellbeing
- improve your quality of life.

Eating the right foods before, during and after treatment can help you feel better and stay stronger



## SOME BASIC FOOD FACTS

Food provides us with the energy (calories or kilojoules) and nutrients our bodies need for everyday activities, including the growth and repair of body tissues and the prevention of infection. By choosing to eat healthy and nutritious food we are more likely to get the right amounts of energy and nutrients needed to help our bodies grow and function properly.

Foods provide essential carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals.

**Carbohydrates** are an important source of energy. Carbohydrates can be stored as sugars (glycogen) in the liver, for short-term energy and as excess fat for long-term energy. Good sources of carbohydrates include: starchy vegetables (for example potato, sweet potato), grains, cereals, breads, pastas, legumes (lentils, chick peas, and kidney beans), rice and fruit.

**Proteins** are needed for every body function, including building and repairing body tissues like skin, muscles, bones and vital organs. They are also important for hormone production and they are a valuable source of energy, vitamins and minerals. Good sources of proteins include: eggs (the best form of absorbable protein), red meat, chicken, fish, nuts, dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt as well as soy products like tofu, dried beans, lentils and seeds.

**Fats** are another important source of energy for the body. They are also necessary for healthy functioning of the body's immune system and nervous system, and for keeping us warm. Our bodies also need fats to help absorb vitamins and minerals and to make some hormones.

A diet rich in unsaturated fats (mainly plant and fish based) is healthier than a diet high in saturated fats. Unsaturated sources include olive oil, avocados, nuts, sunflower and safflower oil, and omega 3 fats from fish such as sardines, tuna and salmon. Saturated fats come from full fat dairy foods, butter, eggs, meat and chicken.

# NUTRITION AT DIAGNOSIS

When you are first diagnosed, you have a great deal to cope with both emotionally and physically. The shock of the diagnosis may mean you don't want to eat or even think about food.

Eating well before your treatment begins can help to give you more energy and strength to cope with treatment. This is not always possible however, as treatment sometimes needs to begin soon after the diagnosis is made.

The dietician at your treating centre will be able to advise you on ways to eat well. Dieticians can also be found via community health centres. Your partner, carer, relatives and friends can also play an important role in helping you to maintain a healthy and nutritious diet. For example they may be able to shop and cook food for you until you feel well enough to do so for yourself.

*Read the Checklist for a Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Plan on page 29.*

## Planning Ahead

Many people find that their normal pattern of eating changes while they are having treatment. During treatment and for some times afterwards you may not feel like cooking or eating the same amount or the same types of food as usual. This is normal. The following are some ideas to help you plan ahead to ensure that you have some convenient and nutritious food available at all times.

- Do a 'cook-up' of your favourite foods before treatment begins and freeze smaller than average size individual servings (you may not want to eat large amounts of food) which can be defrosted, heated and eaten as needed.
- Freeze a variety of soups as a great nutritional stand-by.
- Get family and friends to cook a variety of protein-rich meals (for example meals containing chicken, fish or red meat), including some of your favourite dishes, which you can freeze and use later.
- Cook up a variety of pasta sauces and freeze.
- Always have tinned and packaged foods handy such as tinned baked beans and peas, tinned fish, nuts and dried fruit.

Many people lose weight during treatment. This is particularly true for people undergoing their first intensive hospital period after the diagnosis of acute leukaemia or those undergoing a bone marrow or stem cell transplant. If you are having a transplant you may wish to prepare your body beforehand by choosing to eat more nutritious food and by having some regular exercise.

**Case study: John**

*“As a bit of a foodie and a caterer, good nutrition came easy for me. But when I found out that I could lose weight during the transplant, I decided to build myself up in the three months prior. I did some exercise each day and tried to choose healthy and nutritious food like lean meat, fresh fruit and vegetables, rice, pasta, whole grains and lentils. By transplant day I had gained 13 kilos of muscle, was ready to take on the treatment, felt strong, energised and was in a good food and exercise routine which I continued after the transplant.”*

Here are some tips to help prepare your body and build up your strength before a bone marrow or stem cell transplant:

- eat small nutritious meals often during the day and include protein with your meals
- try to do aerobic exercise like walking at least three times a week
- exercise with a friend
- go easy with weight training on the same muscle group on consecutive days (no more than 2-3 times/week)
- drink plenty of water
- get plenty of rest and sleep
- make the most of this time to really get fit, healthy and positive. It will serve you well throughout the coming months.

Refer to our Kitchen and Pantry Suggestions on Page 31 to help you get an idea of the things that are useful to have around (if you don't have them already).

## Dental Care

Before you start treatment it is a good idea to have a dental check-up. This is important to make sure that your teeth are in the best possible condition before treatment begins. Your dentist, and the nurses and doctors at your treatment centre, will advise you on the best ways to care for your mouth and teeth at different times during and after your treatment.



## NUTRITION DURING TREATMENT AND BEYOND

The side-effects of commonly used cancer treatments (like chemotherapy and radiation therapy) place extra demands on your body for energy and nutrients. At the same time the side-effects of these treatments and the cancer itself can affect your normal eating patterns, reducing your desire for food and your ability to eat the amount or type of food you normally would.

Side-effects and their severity can vary from person to person depending on the type of disease involved, the treatment used and how an individual responds. Some side-effects that can affect normal eating patterns may include the following:

- nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting
- sore mouth and throat
- loss of appetite
- changes in taste and smell
- diarrhoea and/or constipation
- fatigue

There is no doubt that these side-effects can be very unpleasant at times but it's good to remember that most of them are temporary and reversible. It is important that you report any side-effects you are experiencing to your doctor or nurse because many of them can be treated successfully, reducing any unnecessary discomfort for you. In addition, the kinds of food you eat during and after treatment can also help by reducing the severity of side-effects, and in some cases preventing them.



## Nausea and vomiting

Nausea and vomiting are common side-effects of cancer treatments. Thanks to improvements in anti-emetic (anti-nausea) drugs however, nausea is generally well controlled these days.

Tips on coping with nausea and vomiting:

- Take anti-nausea medication as prescribed
- Avoid eating just before or shortly after treatment
- Have smaller meals more frequently during the day, rather than a few large ones
- Ensure you are having cool, clear, unsweetened fluids like water or watered-down juice or nectar (for example pear, mango). Sip on broths, herbal teas (like green tea, ginger tea or raspberry leaf tea), ginger ale, soda water or blackcurrant juice ice blocks
- Get some fresh air and avoid strong or offensive smells
- If you feel better, eat some dry toast or crackers or stewed / canned fruit
- Dry salty foods (for example crackers) and soft drinks (for example ginger ale) are often well tolerated
- Eat cold foods or those served at room temperature to minimise odours and preparation. Try eating small amounts of natural yoghurt
- A grated apple may help to settle nausea
- Try to eat small amounts of white rice when nausea or vomiting subsides
- Limit fatty and fried foods, as these take longer to pass through your stomach, causing more nausea
- Don't go for long periods without eating, as this may make your nausea worse

If you are unable to eat any solid food, it is still important to drink plenty of fluids (about eight to ten glasses a day) so that you don't become dehydrated. Soups or high-protein high-energy drinks can make good substitutes for solid foods during this time. A dietician can help with choosing nutritious fluids. Be sure to tell the doctor or nurse if you are unable to drink or eat much at all.

You will receive anti-emetics (anti-nausea drugs) on a regular basis, before and for a few days after your treatment has finished. Be sure to tell the nurses and doctors if the nausea or vomiting persists for longer, or if you think that the anti-emetics are not working for you. There are many different types of anti-emetics that can be tried.

## **Sore mouth or throat**

A sore mouth or throat, also known as mucositis, is a common and uncomfortable side-effect of some cancer treatments. It usually starts about a week after the treatment has finished and goes away a couple of weeks later. During this time your mouth and throat could get quite sore and it may be difficult to eat. Soluble paracetamol and other topical drugs (ones which can be applied to the sore area) can help. If the pain becomes more severe, stronger painkillers might be needed.

Tips on coping with a sore mouth or throat:

- Take painkillers as prescribed
- Keep your mouth as clean as possible (see below)
- If you normally wear dentures, remove them once you feel your mouth becoming sensitive
- Avoid foods that can irritate your mouth. These may include citrus fruit juices, citrus fruits, spicy or salty food and alcohol. Choose soft, moist foods that are easier to swallow. Examples:
  - cool/warm broths and pureed and strained soups (containing pureed meats and vegetables)
  - minced meats, chicken and fish with lots of sauce
  - cow's milk or soy milkshake with honey, lecithin and yoghurt
  - yoghurt with natural honey, for extra energy
  - soft desserts, for example custard, mousses, crème caramels, rice puddings, ice cream
  - pastas with sauces
  - risottos
  - eggs and egg dishes such as omelette, scrambled, frittata

- soft or pureed fruits, for example stewed apple, pear, prune, peach, watermelon
- bread dipped in egg and lightly fried served with honey and cinnamon

Your dietician can advise you about high-protein and high-energy nutrition supplements if your diet remains inadequate.

## Keeping your mouth clean

It is important to keep your mouth as clean as possible while you are having treatment, to help prevent infection. Your nurse will show you how to care for your mouth and teeth during this time.

Tips on keeping your mouth and teeth clean:

- Using a soft toothbrush and mild toothpaste (if recommended), gently brush your teeth after every meal
- Rinse your mouth with water or a solution recommended by your doctor, dentist or nurse after every meal and every one to two hours when it feels sore
- Choose mouthwashes that are alcohol free and designed for sensitive mouths



## Dry mouth

Some cancer treatments affect the production of saliva, which can cause a dry mouth.

Tips on coping with a dry mouth:

- Increase the amount of fluids you drink each day
- Avoid dry foods
- Rinse out your mouth with water or a recommended solution after food or as necessary

To help stimulate saliva production:

- Rinse your mouth with cold water regularly
- Suck hard sugar free lollies (or soft jellies if your mouth is sore), or chew gum

## Loss of appetite

There are many reasons for loss of appetite. These include the physical side-effects of treatment (mentioned above) as well as the psychological ones. Fear, anxiety and/or depression can all impact upon your desire for food. Most people find that although their appetite improves once they finish treatment, and /or leave hospital, it often takes some time before they are able to eat as much as they used to.

Rather than eating regular large meals during this time, **try eating small amounts** of nutritious food **more frequently** (every couple of hours). This will help keep up your energy levels throughout the day.

Cancer treatment may especially deplete your body of protein. Try to eat three to four serves of protein a day, for example meat, chicken, fish, nuts, dairy, eggs, legumes.

It is always important to drink fluids so that you don't become dehydrated. Nutritious drinks like milkshakes, smoothies, high-protein soups and high-protein/high-energy drinks can make good substitutes for solid foods during this time.

Try to listen to what your body is telling you and think about food in terms of taste and enjoyment first, then as a source of energy and nutrients for your body. The best foods to eat are those you enjoy.

It is a bit like putting the right ingredients into a recipe to get a great result! Try improving your appetite, and your interest in food using:

- Colour. Try more colourful fruit, vegetables and other foods like tomatoes, pumpkin, red and green capsicum, beetroot, carrots, tomato pasta sauce, roasted vegies, spaghetti bolognaise or pasta with pesto sauce.
- Smell. Try foods which smell great such as fresh bread baking, fried onions and garlic, roast chicken, hearty soups or cinnamon or nutmeg in desserts.

- Texture. Try foods with different textures like: crisp lettuce or rice crackers, soft bananas and custards (especially when your mouth is sore) and crunchy raw vegetables like carrots or celery, brazil, macadamia or almond nuts (these also stimulate saliva production).

## Weight loss

Most people lose some weight during their treatment. This may be due to the side-effects of treatment and the body's need for extra energy and nutrients at a time when many people are not eating what they normally would. If you are trying to gain weight or keep your weight stable you may need to increase the amount of calories/kilojoules you are eating, particularly in the form of protein. This means eating more high-protein / high-energy foods and less high-fibre / low-fat ones.

You may also find the following suggestions helpful *if you are trying to gain weight* or keep your weight stable:

- Eat small, nutritious meals frequently (every two hours)
- Choose nutritious snacks, for example: nuts, bananas, dried and fresh fruit, wholegrain breads, muffins and raisin toasts, cakes such as banana, carrot and fruit cake, biscuits with cheese, hummus and other healthy dips
- Choose full fat milk, yoghurt and other dairy products
- Add milk and other protein powders to foods such as soups, casseroles, muesli and cereals
- Add grated cheese to soups, pasta dishes and egg dishes
- Eat lean meat, chicken or fish with cooked vegetables and gravy
- Supplement meals with high-protein/high-energy drinks if recommended (speak to your dietician about suitable recipes/commercial supplements)
- Enrich foods using butter/oils. This is not unhealthy when your body needs extra nourishment

Weight gain may result from the use of steroids. These drugs can increase your appetite and over time might cause your body to hold on to too much fluid (fluid retention). These effects are usually

temporary. Please see your doctor to discuss this type of weight gain if it happens to you.

## Changes in taste and smell

Many people find that food just doesn't taste or smell the same as it did before treatment. It can take some time for your sense of taste and smell to return to normal. In the meantime you could try to improve the taste and smell by trying some of the suggestions below.

Tips on improving your sense of taste and smell:

- Keep your mouth clean and fresh (clean your teeth before and after eating if you can)
- Enhance the taste of food by adding garlic or fresh herbs while cooking, and adding a little more salt to savoury foods or even a little sugar if necessary
- Avoid smells you find unpleasant
- Use plastic utensils if some foods taste metallic
- Try sugar-free lemon drops or mints if you have a metallic taste in your mouth
- Choose a different type of protein if you develop a strong dislike for a particular meat
- Try citrus fruits
- Make foods look, smell and taste more appealing (see above)

## Diarrhoea

Some cancer treatments can cause damage to the lining of your bowel wall. This can lead to cramping, wind, abdominal swelling (bloating) and diarrhoea (frequent passing of loose bowel motions). Be sure to tell your nurse or doctor if you experience any of these symptoms, or if you see blood in your bowel motion or develop a fever.

If you are having diarrhoea it is important to keep yourself as well hydrated as possible to replace fluids and electrolytes lost from your body. Frequent severe diarrhoea may make you dehydrated. If you are losing a great deal of fluid you may need to be topped

up with intravenous (IV) fluids in the hospital day treatment centre, or be admitted to hospital.

Tips on coping with diarrhoea:

- Take anti-diarrhoea medication only if prescribed (follow directions carefully)
- Limit foods that may cause diarrhoea or make it worse, for example foods high in fibre such as wholemeal breads and cereals, citrus fruits, fruits with skins and seeds, dried fruit, large quantities of fruit juice, vegetables including cabbage, brussel sprouts, peas, beans and legumes, alcohol, strong tea, caffeinated drinks like coffee, and spicy food
- Sometimes it can help to reduce the amount of lactose in your diet (by avoiding cow's milk and soft cheeses while you have diarrhoea). Soy or rice milk can be used as a substitute to cow's milk without making your diarrhoea worse as it doesn't contain lactose
- Drink plenty of liquids, water, dilute fruit juices, weak cordials, clear soups, green tea, camomile tea or other herbal teas
- Try sports drinks and/or gastrolyte to replace electrolytes
- Sip boiled water with sliced ginger or a teaspoon of sea salt and a tablespoon of honey
- Sip on miso or vegetable soups
- Suck on fruit juice ice cubes
- Eat boiled white rice and pasta
- If your bottom/anus is sore try using 'baby wipes' which may be more soothing. You may also benefit from applying a barrier cream (like zinc cream or lanolin) to help protect the skin around your anus which can become sore.

## Constipation

Constant changes in treatment, medications (e.g. some chemotherapy and pain relief drugs), food and fluid intake and lack of mobility for long periods can slow bowel function and cause constipation.

Be sure to tell the nurses and doctors if your bowels are not working as regularly as they normally would, if you are experiencing any

discomfort or tenderness around your anus (back passage) when you are trying to move your bowels, or if you have had previous problems with haemorrhoids.

Increasing the amount of fibre and fluids in your diet and having some regular exercise can help to prevent constipation. In some cases a gentle laxative is required to help soften the bowel motion.

You can increase your fibre intake by adding some of the following foods to your diet:

- wholegrain breads like those containing rye, spelt, soy and linseed
- wholegrain pastas
- wholegrains and cereals like those containing bran and oats, rye, barley, brown rice
- fruit and vegetables including celery, carrots, peas, green beans, broccoli, corn, oranges, plums, figs, dates, prunes, apples
- legumes or pulses – lentils, kidney beans, baked beans, chick peas, mung beans, red and black beans, soy and white beans
- seed and nut mixes such as LSA – linseed, sunflower and almonds (buy at supermarket)
- drink eight to ten glasses of fluid a day

## **Why are fluids important?**

It is important to drink plenty of fluids (eight to ten glasses or more) during the day to avoid becoming dehydrated and to keep the kidneys functioning well. Some fluids make great short-term nutritious substitutes for solid food as they contain important nutrients like proteins, vitamins and minerals. Varying the types of fluids you are drinking ensures that you are having a wider range of nutrients throughout the day.

There are many different ‘healthy’ fluids to choose from. These include:

- water – try drinking a couple of litres a day (carry a bottle with you when you go out)
- green tea and other herbal teas

- soups – for example: pea & ham, thick meat & vegetable, mixed vegetable, pumpkin, miso or chicken noodle soup
- milkshakes and smoothies (made with cow's or soy milk)
- juicy fruits – watermelon, oranges, apples, berries, mangoes, citrus, pineapple, grapes, plums, peaches, lychees
- fresh fruit juices – apple, pear, apricot nectar
- ice cubes – made with apple, blackcurrant or pear juice

## **Fatigue**

During treatment, and for some time afterwards, there is a good chance you will feel more tired than usual. It is important to listen to your body and make sure that you have enough rest during the day; for example, you may need an afternoon nap. Apart from getting adequate rest there are some things you can do which may give you more energy and reduce your feelings of fatigue.

Tips on reducing fatigue:

- Have some gentle exercise or physical activity regularly. As well as making you feel better and less fatigued, exercise can give you more energy and help improve your muscle tone. Seek help or advice from the physiotherapist at the hospital or an exercise physiologist or fitness instructor, who is used to working with people with health problems. They can help prescribe activities that are appropriate to your needs at the moment.
- Eat small nutritious meals frequently
- Eat at least three portions of protein a day. Try to include a protein food at each main meal; for example: eggs, meat, fish, nuts or cheese
- Choose foods which will give you energy throughout the day; for example : oats, lentils, multi-grain bread, brown rice dishes
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables
- Drink plenty of fluids (water, fruit juices and vegetable juices) to keep your body hydrated
- Go to bed early if you are tired

## Trouble sleeping

There are many reasons why you may have difficulties sleeping at different times, even when you are tired. These may include side-effects of medications, inactivity, an unfamiliar and or noisy environment and interruptions to your sleep. Anxiety and depression can also interfere with our normal sleeping patterns.

Our eating habits and the kinds of foods we eat can affect our sleeping. If you have difficulty sleeping you may find the following suggestions helpful.

Tips on improving sleep:

- Talk to your doctor or nurse about any difficulties you are having getting to sleep or staying asleep
- Limit the number of stimulant drinks like coffee, cola drinks, alcohol, and tea you have during the day and especially late at night
- Choose more protein-rich foods (meat, dairy foods, lentils, chicken, fish, tofu, eggs, and nuts) throughout the day and less sugary snacks
- Try foods high in tryptophan, which may help you to sleep. These include dairy and soy foods, seafood, red meat and poultry, wholegrains, beans, hummus, lentils, hazelnuts, peanuts, eggs, sesame and sunflower seeds
- Eat small nutritious meals throughout the day and especially at night and ensure that your last major meal is at least two hours before sleep
- Have some regular exercise during the day, if possible in the fresh air. This may help with the quality and length of time you sleep at night. If you are in hospital you may have access to a veranda where you can sit or walk in the fresh air. Make sure you are protected from the sun
- Try a relaxing activity like stretching or meditation before sleeping
- Keep the bedroom for sleep and relaxation

## EATING IN HOSPITAL

There are many reasons why you may not feel like eating much while you are in hospital. If you don't feel like eating the hospital food, the hospital dietician can give you more ideas about the types of foods to suit you at a particular time, or other available food options that are not listed on the menu.

If you are on a high-protein diet you may be offered high-protein or high-energy drinks. If you cannot eat or drink, there are other options available which will give you adequate nutrition for a short time.

Ask your treatment team whether your family and friends can bring in some of your favourite foods. Remind them, however, not to be surprised or too disappointed if you still don't feel like eating.

Have nutritious snacks on hand for the times when you feel hungry. These could include:

- a bowl of fresh seasonal fruit (washed) and peeled
- healthy fruit and nut bars
- single serve cartons of fruit
- fresh bananas or avocados
- long life juices and protein drinks
- small packets of roasted nuts and dried fruits
- rice crackers and cheese
- small tins of tuna, baked beans, fruit
- multigrain or soy and linseed bread, sourdough, fresh bakery bread
- home cooked cake for example, carrot and banana cake

## FOOD FOR CHILDREN

Healthy and nutritious food provides the energy and nutrients needed by growing children. It also helps them to cope better with the demands of cancer and cancer treatment. It may be challenging however getting children to understand and eat what is 'good for them', especially when they are feeling sick, tired or simply do not have any appetite.

The following suggestions may help to improve your child's appetite and enjoyment of food during this time:

- Allow your child to eat when they are hungry, which often means snacking in between meal times. A bowl of cereal or a fruit smoothie is a valuable source of nutrients and energy for your child, especially if they miss out on other meals during the day
- Offer your child healthy snacks and try to limit the amount of high-fat (for example chips and chocolate), high-sugar (for example lollies) foods they eat. These foods are fine to have occasionally but they shouldn't be substituted for more nutritious foods on a regular basis
- Try to make meal times as relaxed and enjoyable as possible for everyone, including you. Where possible, stick to normal family routines around food, for example try to have the usual eating times. If your child doesn't feel like eating at this time, they may feel like eating later
- Make food more interesting by using novelty plates and cutlery, cutting foods like vegetables into different shapes, making faces with pieces of vegetables or meat on pizza. Boxed foods may be more attractive for example dried fruit, Sustagen, protein drinks, fruit juices

Try offering your child some of the following nutritious and tasty foods:

- dips and vegetable sticks
- chunky vegetable, chicken and noodle soup
- homemade healthy pizza
- salmon and potato patties with fresh corn and peas

- freshly cooked salmon/chicken and vegetable kebabs with a tasty dipping sauce
- fruit salad and custard or ice cream (preferably home made)
- stewed fruits for example apple, pear, rhubarb, apricots and peaches
- mashed banana with custard or ice cream (preferably home made)
- toast with melted cheese and tomato, or baked beans and cheese
- vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower in a creamy cheese sauce with slithers of almonds or other nuts
- sweeten foods with honey
- frozen fruit juice cubes or icy poles
- fresh fruit juices
- porridge with brown sugar or honey and fruit (banana, sultanas)
- bowls of colourful seasonal fruit within easy reach e.g. plums, grapes, bananas, cherries, apples, pears, mangoes
- tempura vegetables (vegetables cooked in a light batter) – potatoes, sweet potato, carrots, beans, pumpkin, zucchini
- stir fries with thinly sliced meat, vegetables and noodles
- oven roasted vegetables with olive oil – beetroot, sweet potato, pumpkin or potatoes cut into chips

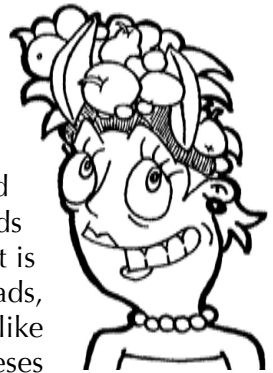
*Tip: have containers of pieces of colourful fruit and vegetables, nuts and dried fruit handy for children to grab during play*

## GENERAL WELLBEING AND FOOD HYGIENE

Blood and bone marrow cancers and their treatment can affect your immune system and make you more susceptible to infection. The length of time it takes for your immune system to recover and in particular your white blood cell count, mainly depends on the type of treatment you have had. Your doctor and nurse will advise you on how to reduce your risk of infection during this time.

It is always important to follow some basic rules about safely storing, cooking and handling foods, to help prevent infection, especially while your immune system (white cell count) is low. All foods contain some bacteria, which generally is not a problem as long as the food is well prepared and well cooked. If in doubt about any food – cook it, and serve it hot and steaming. This destroys any harmful bacteria. The *Food and Hygiene Guide* on page 27 provides some simple and easy to follow rules on food safety and reducing the risk of infection.

Some people are put on a *low bacteria diet* to help reduce their risk of infection while they are having treatment. This generally means avoiding foods that are more likely to contain more harmful microorganisms. It is advisable to consult the dietician and your treatment team about the kinds of foods to avoid while your white blood cell count is low. Some of these foods may include salads, pâté, shellfish, seafood, some vegetables like mushrooms and strawberries and soft cheeses (brie, camembert).



### Vitamin and mineral supplements

It is always a good idea to talk with your treatment team before taking any vitamin and mineral supplements. Many of these substances are expensive and there is still some controversy about their benefits and safety. Some may seriously interfere with the treatment your doctor has prescribed. Eating healthy and nutritious food can usually provide you with all the vitamins and minerals your body needs.

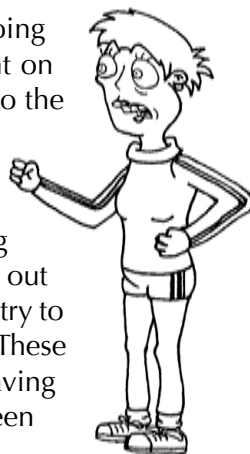
## Alcohol

It is probably fine to drink a small amount of alcohol occasionally (e.g. a glass of wine with dinner) if you feel like it. You do need to check with your doctor however as there may be times when it should be avoided, for example while you are taking certain medications or undergoing certain types of chemotherapy.

## Exercise

There are many benefits to exercising on a regular basis before, during or after treatment. Exercise not only makes you feel better, it also improves your energy levels, sleeping patterns and general strength and fitness. Talk to your doctor or nurse first, then exercise professionals about the kind of exercise that might be most suitable for you.

If you are exercising outdoors (for example going for a walk) you need to avoid direct sunlight on your skin. Your skin is particularly sensitive to the damaging effects of ultraviolet (UV) sunlight after treatment and can burn easily. You can protect your skin from the sun by wearing a hat, a long sleeved top and pants and applying sunscreen to any exposed areas. You can go out in the early morning and late evening but do try to avoid the sunniest (peak UV) parts of the day. These are between 11am and 3pm in daylight saving time (late October to late March), and between 10am and 2pm the rest of the year.



## Food and hygiene guide

### *Food preparation*

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before handling food
- Clean surfaces and equipment thoroughly before preparing food
- Wear catering rubber gloves when handling raw meat (available in supermarkets and chemists)
- Use different chopping boards and different knives for raw and ready to eat foods

- Wash cutting boards and knives with dishwashing soap after each use, especially if cutting raw meat or fish (put washed cutting boards, dish cloths and tea towels in the sun to dry)
- Wash and peel raw fruit and vegetables before cooking and eating
- Thaw frozen foods completely before cooking or reheating, especially raw chicken and other meats (thaw in the refrigerator overnight, not on the kitchen bench)
- Thaw food once only (do not refreeze thawed foods)
- Reheat thawed cooked foods, until steaming hot

### ***Cooking***

- Cook meats and seafood thoroughly before serving (even if you like rare meat)
- Once cooked, serve food immediately or keep steaming hot until serving
- If you are using a microwave, stir food and ensure it is steaming hot all the way through before serving
- When eating out, order food which is freshly cooked and steaming hot

### ***Storage***

- Store raw and ready-to-eat foods separately
- Always cover raw and cooked food in the fridge
- Always store raw meat covered and away from other foods in the fridge. Always keep it below cooked foods
- Discard raw meat in the fridge after one day
- Do not eat foods from salad bars, pie or food warmers
- If cooking food in advance, cool and chill or freeze straightaway – do not leave food to cool on the benchtop
- Avoid foods past 'use by' date
- Avoid foods in damaged packaging

(For more tips on food hygiene and preparation visit [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au))

# CHECKLIST FOR A HEALTHY EATING AND LIFESTYLE PLAN

The following are some suggestions for a healthy eating and lifestyle plan which you and your family may find helpful.

- ✓ Drink lots of water every day (eight to ten glasses) – keep a drink bottle handy
- ✓ Eat a variety of foods
- ✓ Eat a variety of colourful fruit and vegetables in season
- ✓ Have citrus fruits to increase intake of vitamin C
- ✓ If juicing fruit, drink it straight afterwards. This ensures that you get the most benefit from the vitamins contained in the fruit
- ✓ Include green leafy vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, brussels, kale, spinach, rocket, lettuce, bok choy
- ✓ Always wash fruit and vegetables before cooking and/or eating
- ✓ Eat protein with every meal
- ✓ Eat deep-sea fish such as tuna, salmon, perch up to three times a week
- ✓ Increase your intake of fibre by including foods such as grains, cereals, vegetables (unless you have diarrhoea)
- ✓ Include garlic, onion, fresh turmeric and herbs like parsley, coriander, sage, basil when preparing meals as these are rich in vitamins and minerals
- ✓ Limit deep fried foods
- ✓ Ensure your intake of essential fats is adequate by eating foods such as avocados, olive oil, nuts, fish (especially oily fish like salmon), flaxseeds and oil, sunflower seeds
- ✓ Reduce alcohol to one standard drink or less a day for a woman and two standard drinks or less a day for a man. Have at least two alcohol-free days a week. (Ask your doctor about alcohol, you may be told to avoid alcohol completely during treatment)

- ✓ Quit smoking (contact the Quitline, or your GP if you need help to do this – it is hard for many people)
- ✓ Take some regular daily exercise. Small lots of 10-15 minutes a couple of times a day is beneficial. But remember to only do as much as you are comfortable with
- ✓ Stretch, meditate, do yoga and try to laugh more!!

# KITCHEN AND PANTRY SUGGESTIONS

To make life easier and your nutritional choices simpler, here are some non-essential, but useful suggestions to have on hand in your kitchen or pantry:

- ✓ Juicer machine
- ✓ Non-stick frying pan
- ✓ A sharp knife
- ✓ Containers of dried chickpeas, lentils, rice, red kidney beans, oats
- ✓ Spices – nutmeg, turmeric, coriander, cumin, basil, oregano, star anise
- ✓ Salad herbs – parsley, coriander, basil, sage, rosemary, thyme
- ✓ Olive oil or canola oil for cooking
- ✓ Hoi sin sauce, soy and sweet soy, rice noodles
- ✓ Tinned tomatoes for pasta sauces
- ✓ Dried noodles and pasta
- ✓ Packets of dried biscuits for example water crackers and/or rice crackers
- ✓ Small tins of tuna, sardines and baked beans for quick snacks
- ✓ Onions, garlic and ginger
- ✓ Take-away plastic containers for freezing foods
- ✓ Your favourite cookbook

## Rice

Did you know there are many types of rice?

- white rice (including 'fragrant' types like Jasmine and Basmati)
- brown rice (has the husk still attached and is high in fibre)
- arborio rice (used for risotto)

- wild rice (is black and high in fibre. Cook a small amount with white rice for a great visual and taste effect)

## **Freezer Foods**

- vegetables including stir-fry mix of carrots, broccoli, capsicum, sugar snap peas, water chestnuts
- corn and peas, broad beans, cauliflower, baby beans and spinach
- frozen raspberries and blueberries are a great standby for smoothies and desserts
- fish, chicken fillets, lean red meat (beef or lamb)

## **Bread**

Try something different such as flat breads and wraps, and corn tortillas.

# USEFUL INTERNET ADDRESSES

- American Cancer Society  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- Bone & Marrow Transplant Information Network  
[www.bmtinfonet.org](http://www.bmtinfonet.org)
- CancerBACUP (A UK cancer information site)  
[www.cancerbacup.org.uk](http://www.cancerbacup.org.uk)
- Food Standard Australia New Zealand  
[www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)
- Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of America  
[www.leukemia-lymphoma.org](http://www.leukemia-lymphoma.org)
- Leukaemia Foundation of Australia  
[www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)
- Leukaemia Foundation of Australia – online support group  
[www.talkbloodcancer.com](http://www.talkbloodcancer.com)
- National Cancer Institute (USA)  
[www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo](http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo)
- National Cancer Institute (USA) – eating tips  
[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/eatinghints](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/eatinghints)
- The Cancer Council Australia  
[www.cancercouncil.org.au](http://www.cancercouncil.org.au)

## RECIPE IDEAS

The following recipes provide examples of healthy, nutritious and easy-to-prepare meals and snacks, which you and your family may enjoy.

Further recipes are available on the Leukaemia Foundation's website [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)

### Tasty Toast Options

Try some of the following on toast.

- Fried mushrooms (in olive oil) with black pepper and some chopped parsley
- Sardines, tahini, lemon juice and pepper to taste
- Baked beans fried in onion with grated cheddar cheese, pepper and some chopped parsley
- Tomatoes roasted in oven for 20 minutes with olive oil, balsamic vinegar and topped with basil and pepper to taste
- Avocado spread thickly with black pepper to taste
- Avocado, tomato and smoked salmon
- Scrambled eggs with fried onion, turmeric, rocket or parsley

### Sandwich Fillings

- Tuna, Spanish onion, mayonnaise
- Avocado, hummus, chicken and rocket (washed thoroughly)
- Pesto, turkey, tomato, lettuce (washed thoroughly)
- Tinned salmon, squeeze of lemon juice, capers, mayonnaise and lettuce
- Chicken, walnuts, rocket and mayonnaise
- Hard boiled egg, mayonnaise, chives and parsley with lettuce
- Cold roast lamb or beef, horseradish mustard, lettuce, chutney
- Avocado, cheese, lettuce or rocket, tomato, cucumber, beetroot

## Hot Sandwich Fillings

- Baked beans, cheese and tomato
- Spaghetti bolognese sauce, grated parmesan and rocket
- Ham, tomato and cheese with fresh basil
- Slices of roasted vegetables – red and green capsicums, zucchini, onions and tomatoes with pesto

## Easy Tuna Salad

### *Serves 2*

Contains Omega 3 oils, good combination of proteins and carbohydrates

- 2 small tins tuna in oil or brine
- Small Spanish onion diced
- 1 tblsp mayonnaise, juice of half lemon, half tsp French mustard, pepper
- 2 hard boiled eggs, quartered
- Cooked, cold green beans
- Cooked cold new potatoes, halved
- Finely diced anchovies (optional)
- Leaves of baby cos or iceberg lettuce (washed thoroughly) broken up
- Fresh chopped parsley
- Cherry tomatoes halved
- Mixing bowl

Mix all ingredients and serve for lunch or dinner in mixing bowl

## Healthy Pizza

### Serves 1

- Commercial whole meal pizza bases (buy in supermarket freezer section)
- Tomato paste
- Fresh chopped basil leaves
- Slices of mozzarella cheese
- Slices of mushrooms
- Green, red and yellow capsicum finely chopped

Smear tomato paste onto pizza bases and then add layers of cheese topped with fresh basil, mushrooms and capsicums.

Bake in a hot oven for five minutes or until cheese melts. Grill for two minutes.

### ***Cooking Fish:***

*Heat oven to 200°C*

*Wrap fish fillets in foil with some sliced lemon and chopped fresh herbs or nuts*

*Place into oven for 15 minutes*

*Remove from oven and let stand for 5 minutes*

## Brown Rice With Stir-fried Vegetables

### *Serves 2*

This brown rice recipe is slower to digest, high in fibre, and includes most of your daily vegetable requirements. Good for constipation.

For ease of preparation place all veggies into a blender and pulse until diced.

- Cooked brown rice (use 2 cups)
- One onion finely diced
- One green capsicum diced
- One yellow capsicum diced
- One red capsicum diced
- 1 cup of diced zucchini
- 250gms mushrooms
- Fresh corn cut from one cob
- Clove of garlic finely sliced
- Two sticks of celery diced
- Six snow peas cut diagonally or 1 cup of fresh or frozen peas
- One hot red chilli diced (optional)
- 1 tblsp olive oil
- Sweet soy sauce

Stir-fry veggies in olive oil and add two tablespoons of sweet soy, add to rice and mix. Serve hot or cold.

## Hearty Bean Soup

### Serves 4

Increase quantities for more servings. This is a great winter soup. For individual meals, freeze in small containers.

- 250 grams of cannellini beans, red kidney beans and black-eyed beans (soaked overnight)
- 1 litre of water and 1.5 litres of vegetable stock
- 1 medium onion
- 4 cloves garlic
- 250 grams firm tofu (cubed) - optional. In fridge section of supermarket or Asian stores
- 2 tblsps olive oil
- 1 potato cubed
- 1 large carrot
- 1 tblsp sage chopped
- 1 tblsp parsley chopped
- 250 grams of cabbage finely shredded
- Ham hock (optional)
- Pepper to taste
- ½ tsp-smoked paprika (optional)
- 1 large can of tomatoes
- Grated parmesan
- Pepper to taste

Lightly fry onions, garlic, and sage in half the olive oil and set aside.

Boil beans for one hour until soft. Add water and stock with potato, carrot and ham hock and simmer for another hour. Add remaining ingredients bring to boil, simmer for 30 minutes until cabbage is cooked. Before serving, add tofu if desired.

Season and serve with grated parmesan and chopped parsley.

## Ginger Tea

Ginger tea is a great alternative to other herbal teas and good for stomach upsets, nausea or vomiting. You can usually buy ginger tea from the tea section of the supermarket or health food shop.

To make your own

- Two slices of fresh ginger in a cup of boiled water. Leave to stand for 5 minutes and sip

## Green Tea

Green tea is available in teabags or loose leaves from tea section of most supermarkets. If using a teabag, you can get 2 cups from the one bag by dipping for about 10 seconds and then discarding the teabag. For a pot of green tea, use 2 teaspoons of leaves and pour into cups immediately.

Note: Green tea becomes quite tart/bitter if left to stand and is best drunk immediately after preparing.

## Stewed fruit

Choose fresh fruit in season.

Combine selected fruit in a lidded pot covering the base with water. Bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer until fruit is soft. You don't need to add sugar if you don't want to, as the fruit itself is often sweet enough. Rhubarb is an exception to this rule and may have a tablespoon of sugar or honey added during the cooking process. If you are cooking apples, you may want to add half a teaspoon of cinnamon and some cloves for taste.

Combinations of fruit for stewing include:

- Apricots, peaches, plums
- Rhubarb, apple, sultanas
- Prunes, apples
- Apples, cinnamon, cloves

Serve on porridge or muesli with natural yoghurt.

## Protein Shakes

High-protein /high-energy.

Ideal after exercise and to build strength and muscle.

Combine the following ingredients in a blender:

- ½ cup of milk, 2 tblsps of natural or fruit yogurt, 1 tblsp honey, 1 tblsp of LSA\*, 2 tblsp milk powder, handful of blueberries and half a banana

or

- ½ cup of milk, one banana, ½ mango, 1 tblsp wheatgerm, 2 tblsps of natural yoghurt and 1 tblsp malt powder

or

- 1 cup of buttermilk with assorted fruit, 1 tblsp wheatgerm and mixed and 2 tblsps milk powder.

\***LSA** is a combination of ground linseeds, sunflower seeds and almonds, which gives a pleasant nutty flavour. It is a rich source of essential fatty acids, fibre and protein. Best used on breakfast cereal, in pasta sauces, in salads, as a soup thickener or in bread and biscuits. You can buy LSA from the supermarket or make it yourself (see below).

To make a quantity to last one person for a month:

- 1 cup of almonds
- 2 cups of sunflower seeds
- 3 cups of linseeds
- 2 tblsps natural wheat germ (optional)

Place all ingredients into a food processor or grind with a pestle and mortar to a consistency similar to breadcrumbs. Store in a sealed container away from light. Keeps fresh for up to one month.



Leukaemia  
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Please send to:

The Leukaemia Foundation  
GPO Box 9954  
in your capital city.



**Please send me a copy of the following information booklets:**

- Living with Leukaemias, Lymphomas, Myeloma & Related Disorders: Information and support
- Understanding Leukaemias, Lymphomas, Myeloma & Related Disorders
- Understanding Acute Myeloid Leukaemia
- Understanding Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia
- Understanding Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia
- Understanding Chronic Myeloid Leukaemia
- Coping with Childhood Leukaemia
- Understanding Lymphomas (Non-Hodgkin's lymphomas or B-cell & T-cell lymphomas)
- Understanding Allogeneic Transplants
- Understanding Autologous Transplants
- Understanding Myelodysplastic Syndromes
- Understanding Myeloma
- Eating Well: A practical guide for people living with leukaemias, lymphomas & myeloma

**Or information about:**

- The Leukaemia Foundation's support services
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or freecall 1800 620 420

or email: [info@leukaemia.org.au](mailto:info@leukaemia.org.au)

Further information is available on the Leukaemia Foundation's website

**[www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)**









# Leukaemia Foundation

VISION TO CURE  
MISSION TO CARE

This information booklet is produced by the Leukaemia Foundation and is one in a series on blood cancers and related disorders.

Some booklets are also available in other languages. Copies of this booklet and the other booklets can be obtained from the Leukaemia Foundation in your state by contacting us on

Freecall: 1800 620 420  
Email: [info@leukaemia.org.au](mailto:info@leukaemia.org.au)  
Website: [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)

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July 06

