

Health and wellbeing

Living a healthy lifestyle can help you before, during and after cancer treatment. But even small changes make a big difference. There are different things you can do that may have a positive effect:

- [eat healthily and keep active](#)
- follow sensible drinking guidelines
- [stop smoking](#)
- find ways to [reduce stress](#).

Tips for managing health and wellbeing

- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables – at least 5 portions a day. Fruits and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals, and fibre.
- Eat plenty of starchy foods (carbohydrates). Choose wholegrain types such as wholemeal bread, pasta, noodles or couscous. Brown rice and potatoes are also good sources of carbohydrates.
- Eat some protein-rich foods, such as lean meat, poultry, fish, nuts, eggs and pulses (beans and lentils). Your body needs protein to do things like building and repairing muscles and other body tissues.
- Have some milk and dairy foods, such as cheese and yoghurt.
- Limit foods that are high in fat and sugar as they often do not have any extra vitamins or minerals.
- Water is the best fluid to drink to keep your body hydrated. Try to drink at least 2 litres (3 1/2 pints) of fluids each day.
- Many people with cancer find there are times when they cannot eat as much as usual. Sometimes this leads to weight loss. If you lose too much weight, it is important to talk to a dietitian. They can suggest changes, such as nutritional supplements to prevent further weight loss and help you gain weight.
- The amount you eat is just as important as what you eat. If you eat big portions, you are more likely to gain weight. If you want to lose weight, you can eat smaller portions by using a smaller plate, eating slowly and avoiding second helpings.
- If you have not been active, increase your activity slowly. Try to do a little more each week.
- Being active before, during and after treatment is safe. It can reduce tiredness, help you keep to a healthy weight, strengthen muscles, improve bone health and increase your confidence.
- It is important to do something you enjoy and that fits in with your life. This could be walking to the shops, gardening or going dancing with friends. Or you might go to a class at a local leisure centre or start a sport or an active hobby.
- Do not drink more than 14 units of alcohol in a week. Spread the alcohol units you drink in a week over 3 or more days. Try to have several alcohol-free days every week.
- Stopping smoking can be hard. There are stop smoking services that can help. Talk to your doctor if you want to go to a stop smoking service.
- Talk about your feelings with family, friends, health professionals or people going through a similar experience.
- Try [complementary therapies](#) such as relaxation, meditation and yoga. Before using complementary therapies, talk to your healthcare team to check they are suitable for you.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- [Managing weight gain after cancer treatment](#)
- [The building-up diet](#)
- [Physical activity and cancer](#)
- [Stop smoking – easy read](#)
- [Drink less alcohol – easy read](#)
- [Cancer and complementary therapies.](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk where you can [chat to us online](#).

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Other useful contact details

- British Dietetic Association – visit www.bda.uk.com or call 0121 200 8080
- British Nutrition Foundation – visit www.nutrition.org.uk or call 020 7557 7930
- Live Well – NHS – visit www.nhs.uk/live-well
- Mind – visit www.mind.org.uk or call 0300 123 3393.

Notes and questions
