

Moving oncology care forward so that you can look forward to life's moments

Malnutrition in persons receiving cancer treatment



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Patients diagnosed with cancer and who are receiving chemotherapy, radiation therapy or surgery have a high risk of becoming malnourished. Your body requires the right amount of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to prevent malnutrition. Malnutrition in this instance can be described as not getting enough nutrients and energy through the foods you eat.

It is reported that up to 80% of persons undergoing cancer treatment are malnourished. Malnutrition is more common among patients with cancers affecting the gastrointestinal tract, head and neck, liver and lung, or older patients and patients with cancer at more advanced stages.

/ Why is it important to prevent malnutrition when you are diagnosed with cancer?

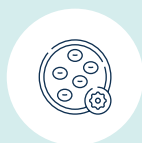
Malnutrition is detrimental to your health, especially when you are receiving cancer treatment. The consequences of malnutrition may include:



Loss of weight and muscle (muscle wasting)



Increased risk of infections



Increased risk of worsened side-effects associated to cancer treatment



Decreased compliance to cancer treatment



Reduced effectiveness of treatment



Longer and more frequent hospital stays



Increased risk for bone fractures



Loss of independence



Increased death risk



Increased stress levels



Increased healthcare costs

2 Malnutrition warning signs

It may be difficult to pick it up if you are malnourished, therefore it is necessary to look out for these warning signs:



3 What can you do to prevent malnutrition?



Adequate nutritional intake is important to prevent malnutrition. Eat smaller, regular and balanced meals and speak to a dietitian at your closest Life Oncology unit who can support you during your treatment journey.

If you experience side-effects from the cancer treatment or notice any warning signs of malnutrition, ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a registered dietitian to assist you with healthy eating guidelines, meal plans as well as guidelines on how to manage any side effects affecting your dietary intake. Ask your dietitian about oral supplements that you can consume to ensure adequate nutritional intake.

References

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America Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition

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