Diet and Cancer
Hong Kong Cancer Fund

Hong Kong Cancer Fund was established in 1987 to provide support, information and care to those living with cancer and to increase awareness and knowledge of cancer in our community.

Our CancerLink Care Centres offer professional support and connect various cancer patient support groups to form an extensive support network for cancer patients and families, offering emotional support and practical assistance to those touched by cancer.

This publication is one in a series of cancer information booklets which discuss different aspects of the disease, including possible treatment, side effects and emotional issues. They are intended to inform the public about available treatment and care. You can also download the information from our website: www.cancer-fund.org.

The free services offered by Hong Kong Cancer Fund are made possible only because of donation from the public. If you would like to show your support and concern for cancer patients, please feel free to contact us. Your generosity will directly benefit cancer patients in Hong Kong. You can also use our donation form at the back of this booklet to make your contribution.

For further information on our services and our work,
Please call our
CancerLink Hotline : 3656 0800
Or visit our website :
www.cancer-fund.org

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Food contributes much to the quality of our lives and is more than just a physical need. Meal times are an important and enjoyable part of family and social life. Many people with cancer experience eating problems. This booklet is divided into three parts and it is intended to help you in overcoming these difficulties. If you find it hard to discuss your eating problems with your family or friends, you may like to recommend this booklet so they can help you with your diet.

**Part One: The Building-Up Diet**

It is a diet high in energy and protein. This diet has been designed specifically for people with cancer who have lost or are losing weight or can only manage to eat a little. We do not recommend this diet for people with cancer who are eating well and have not lost weight.

**Part Two: Eating Problems**

This has helpful hints for people with cancer who have temporary eating problems caused by their disease or treatment. For example, you may be feeling sick, having mouth ulcers or being too tired to cook a normal meal.

**Part Three: A Healthy Eating Guide**

This is for people with cancer who do not have eating or weight loss problems but would like to follow a healthy diet.
Many people with cancer find that there are times when they cannot eat as much as usual and sometimes they lose weight. There are lots of reasons why this happens. Cancer itself or its treatment may cause you to lose your appetite. Some people do not feel hungry or feel full soon after starting a meal. Others find that food makes them feel sick or they notice a change in the taste of some foods.

People who are not eating enough, especially those who are losing weight, need more energy and protein in their diet. This section of the booklet will show you how to get more energy and protein without necessarily having to eat more food. Not everyone will be able to put on weight with this building-up diet, but the following suggestions should help to slow down or stop weight loss.
Eat well

A good diet is one that provides you with everything you need to keep your body working well. The key to a good diet is variety and balance.

■ Everyday foods

You should try to include everyday foods from each of the following groups:

• Carbohydrates

Breads, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals, cakes, biscuits and sweets are carbohydrate sources which provide energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals. Wholemeal and whole grain varieties are especially high in fibre.

• Vitamins, minerals and fibre

Fresh fruit and fresh vegetables are good sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre can be eaten raw or lightly cooked, or made into juices. Dried and frozen fruit and vegetables can also be good sources of vitamins.

Vitamins are essential substances which help our bodies to work normally, but we only need tiny amount of them. If you are eating even a little of the main foods that contain...
vitamins, you are probably getting a good enough supply.

However, if you are not eating well over a long period of time, you may need a multivitamin tablet to top up your body’s stores. Your doctor, dietitian or pharmacist at your local chemist can advise you about these. There is no scientific evidence to prove that taking large amount of vitamins is helpful. In fact it can be harmful to take excessive amount of certain vitamins, especially Vitamins A and D.

Minerals are substances needed by the body for various functions: such as making bones and teeth, maintaining body fluids and tissues, maintaining healthy nerves and building necessary chemicals (enzymes).

Some minerals are needed in larger amount than others, such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, potassium and chlorine. Others are needed in smaller quantities and are called trace minerals, e.g. iron, zinc, iodine, fluoride, selenium and copper. Despite the fact that smaller amount is needed, trace minerals are no less important than other minerals.

Different foods supply
different amount of minerals. Eating a varied diet will give an adequate supply of most minerals for healthy people.

- **Protein**

Meat, poultry, fish, beans, lentils, nuts, eggs, milk and cheese are protein sources which provide vitamins, minerals and energy as well.

Proteins make up the basic building blocks of the body. Every part of the body is made up of protein and we need to eat protein every day to maintain and repair our body tissues. The body must have extra protein, as well as extra energy, when we are ill, injured or under stress in order to repair any damage.

- **Fats**

Sources of fat including oil, butter, margarine, fatty meats, oily fish, eggs, cheese, cream, nuts, salad dressing or mayonnaise, full-fat milk, yoghurts and fromage frais. Some of these also provide protein, vitamins and energy.

Note: Make sure that eggs are well cooked. Avoid soft cheese like brie, and cheeses made from unpasteurised milk. This is because these foods carry a risk of infection.

- **Energy**

Energy is measured in calories, so a calorie is simply a unit of energy. We all need a certain number of calories each
day to provide the energy to live. We need energy even if we are not very active, for example, just sitting in a chair we need energy to breathe. On the whole, if there are too many calories in our diet, we gain weight and if there are too few, we start to use up our body stores of energy and lose weight. The amount of energy each person needs per day varies. It depends on how quickly their body uses the energy and their level of activity. An adult man needs approximately 2500 kcal per day and an adult woman approximately 2000 kcal.

• **Fluids**

The body needs a certain amount of fluid each day in order to function properly. If you do not feel well it may be difficult to drink enough liquid, but it is important to drink at least 1½ litres of fluid a day (2 pints). This can be taken as water, fruit juice or squash. Drinks that contain caffeine (such as coffee, tea and some fizzy drinks) may make you dehydrated because they can make you produce more urine - caffeine is a diuretic.
How to boost your energy and protein?

If you have a good appetite, you should have no trouble eating extra energy and protein foods to fortify your diet. But if you have a poor appetite, there are two ways to add extra energy and protein to your diet, without actually having to eat more food.

The first is to use everyday foods high in energy and protein, and the second is to use manufactured food supplements. These can be taken as nourishing drinks, which are available as milk shakes or soups. Some supplements are high-protein powders that can be added to your normal food.

■ Manufactured food supplements

Important note:

High protein supplements should only be used with advice from your doctor or dietitian. Most people will need extra energy with a balance of protein.

Many of these products can be used by diabetics. Complete milk tasting drinks and powders should be drunk slowly over a period of 20 minutes.
High energy and juice tasting supplements have a high carbohydrate (sugar) content and are therefore not usually suitable for diabetics.

If you are a diabetic you should always seek advice from your doctor or dietitian before using food supplements.

There are many commercially available supplements which can add extra energy and/or protein to your diet. They are usually available from your chemist. Some are available on prescription from your doctor. Some supplements are available in ready to drink or use form while others need mixing. Some can be added to food.

If you have difficulty in finding some of these products in Hong Kong, friends and relatives in the U.K. or U.S. may be able to help as all the listed products are widely available in those countries. The list of commercial supplements, please refer to page 15-18.
How to add extra energy and protein to everyday food?

■ **Fortified milk**

Add two tablespoonfuls of dried milk powder to a pint (60cl) of full-cream milk. Keep it in the fridge and use it in drinks and cooking. Use fortified milk, Fortisip Neutral or Entera Neutral instead of water to make soups, jellies, custard and puddings.

■ **Breakfast cereals**

Use fortified milk. Add syrup or honey to porridge or use 2-3 teaspoons of a high-energy supplement e.g. Polycal Powder, Maxijul or Polycose instead of sugar or salt. Make porridge with all milk or cream.

■ **Casseroles and soups**

Add lentils, beans and noodles. Stir a tablespoon of cream into canned soups or add energy and protein supplements. Make up packet soups with fortified milk or a milk-tasting supplement e.g. Fortisip Neutral or Entera Neutral.

■ **Nibbles**

Keep snacks like nuts, crisps, fresh and dried fruit, biscuits, crackers, yoghurts or fromage frais handy to nibble if you feel
hungry between meals.

■ **Puddings**

Add ice cream, cream or evaporated milk to cold puddings, and custard made with fortified milk to hot puddings. Make up instant desserts with fortified milk. Try adding sugar or syrup to ice cream or other puddings. Alternatively, try some pudding recipes for use with Fortisip, Ensure Plus or Entera.

■ **Mashed potato**

Mashed potato can be enriched by adding a dessertspoon of butter or cream and by sprinkling grated cheese on top. High-energy and protein supplements can also be added or supplements such as Polycal Powder, Vitajoule or Caloreen.

■ **Vegetables**

Melt butter on top of hot vegetables or garnish with grated cheese or chopped hard-boiled egg. Alternatively, serve with a sauce made with fortified milk.

■ **Sandwiches**

Spread fillings thickly. Add a dessertspoon of mayonnaise to sandwich fillings like hard-boiled egg, or tuna fish.

■ **Drinks**

Use fortified milk, or half milk instead of water when making coffee and bedtime drinks. Add three teaspoonfuls of a high-
energy supplement to hot or cold drinks. Commercial drinks can be drunk straight from the pack, gently heated or incorporated into recipes.

### Nourishing drinks

If you sometimes cannot face a meal, have a nourishing drink instead. You can also drink these between meals to help put on some weight. Some people like an occasional glass of Guinness or stout to help their appetite, or you might like to make your own drinks such as fruit milkshakes. To make a nutritious milkshake, mix fortified milk with either pureed fruit or a fruit yoghurt and add 2-3 teaspoonfuls of a high-energy powder supplement. A scoop of ice cream will top it off tastily, and add extra energy.

#### Ready to drink/use supplements

You may find it easier to buy a ready to drink, flavoured supplement from your chemist. Your doctor can also offer you a prescription for them. Supplements such as Fortisip, Fortifresh, Ensure Plus and Entera, or Fortijuice, Enlive and Provide are nutritionally balanced, so occasionally you can have one of them instead of a meal if you do not feel like eating. Supplements such as Polycal Liquid, Calsip or Maxijul Liquid are energy-only drinks.
■ **Powdered drinks**

Other balanced and flavoured-meal drinks are available as powders which can be mixed with milk or water (e.g. Build-Up or Complan). These can be bought from your chemist and from some supermarkets.

■ **Powders which can be added to food**

There are also unflavoured powders available to buy or on prescription. Energy-only powders include Polycal Powder, Maxijul or Polycose. Protein-only powders include Protifar, Maxipro Super Soluble or Vitapro.

Since these powders are virtually tasteless, you can add them to drinks, soups, sauces, gravies, casseroles, flan fillings, milk puddings and instant desserts made with liquids.

You will probably need to experiment a little to find out how much you can add to each particular dish without changing the flavour or texture of your food. A good way to start is to add 2-3 tablespoons of a powdered protein supplement such as Protifar, Maxipro Super Soluble or Vitapro to a pint (60cl) of full-cream milk. Alternatively 2-3 teaspoons of an energy supplement such as Polycal Powder, Vitajoule or Caloreen can be added to a cup of tea or coffee. Energy supplements are almost flavourless and are not as sweet as sugar.
# Commercial supplements

## Ready to drink

### A. Complete high-energy, milk-tasting (1*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fortisip</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet, savoury and neutral)</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinutren 1.5</td>
<td>200ml cup (sweet)</td>
<td>Nestlé Clinical Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Plus</td>
<td>220ml carton (sweet/neutral)</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresubin Energy Drink</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet, savoury and neutral)</td>
<td>Fresenius Kabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Protein Extra</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet)</td>
<td>Novartis Consumer Health</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### B. Complete high-energy, milk-tasting with fibre (1a*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fortisip Multifibre</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet)</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresubin Energy Fibre Drink</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet)</td>
<td>Fresenius Kabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrich Plus</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet)</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProSure</td>
<td>240ml carton (neutral)</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
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### C. Yoghurt-tasting (1*)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fortifresh</td>
<td>200ml carton (sweet)</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure plus-yoghurt</td>
<td>200ml carton (neutral and orange)</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>-style</td>
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### D. Balanced, juice-tasting (1*)

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<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fortijuce</td>
<td>200ml carton</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinutren Fruit</td>
<td>200ml cup</td>
<td>Nestlé Clinical Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlive Plus</td>
<td>240ml carton</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Xtra</td>
<td>200ml carton</td>
<td>Fresenius Kabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Fruit Flavour</td>
<td>200ml carton</td>
<td>Novartis Consumer Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Powder

#### A. Complete, milk-tasting (1*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutri Plus</td>
<td>Box 4 x 36g sachet (sweet and neutral)</td>
<td>Nutricia Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complan</td>
<td>Box 4 x 57g sachet (sweet and savoury)</td>
<td>H J Heinz &amp; Co Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build-Up</td>
<td>Box 4 x 38g sachet (sweet and savoury)</td>
<td>Nestlé Clinical Nutrition</td>
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### B. Energy-only (2*)

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<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polycal Powder</td>
<td>400g tin</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxijul</td>
<td>200g tin</td>
<td>SHS International Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polycose</td>
<td>350g tin</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitajoule</td>
<td>200g tin</td>
<td>Vitaflo Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caloreen</td>
<td>500g tin</td>
<td>Nestlé Clinical Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandishake Mix</td>
<td>Box 6 x 85g sachet (sweet flavours)</td>
<td>SHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calshake</td>
<td>Box 7 x 87g sachet (sweet flavours)</td>
<td>Fresenius Kabi</td>
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### C. Protein-only powders (3*)

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<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protifar</td>
<td>225g tub</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maxipro</td>
<td>200g tub</td>
<td>SHS International Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitapro</td>
<td>250g tub</td>
<td>Vitaflo Ltd</td>
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### Energy-only liquids (4*)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polycal Liquid</td>
<td>200ml bottle</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxijul Liquid</td>
<td>200ml carton</td>
<td>SHS International Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calogen</td>
<td>250ml and 1 litre bottles</td>
<td>SHS International Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fat supplement)</td>
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### Fortified puddings (5*)

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<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forticreme</td>
<td>125g pot</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formance</td>
<td>113g pot</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxisorb</td>
<td>30g sachet (to make up)</td>
<td>SHS International Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinutren Dessert</td>
<td>125g pot</td>
<td>Nestlé Clinical Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Energy</td>
<td>125g cup</td>
<td>Novartis Consumer Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Powders to thicken food (6*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutilis</td>
<td>225g tin</td>
<td>Nutricia Clinical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick and Easy</td>
<td>225g tin</td>
<td>Fresenius Kabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thixo-D</td>
<td>375g tin</td>
<td>Sutherland Health Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitaquick</td>
<td>300g pot</td>
<td>Vitaflo Ltd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commercial supplements key for aboved table

1. These contain energy, protein and vitamins and minerals in various amount. Available in a variety of flavours, they can be used as additional nutrition or added to recipes - please refer to the sample menus on page 20-25 for ideas.
1a. As (1) above, but with added fibre.

2. These contain energy only and have no taste. They can be added to normal foods.

3. These contain protein only and have no taste. They can be added to normal foods.

4. These contain energy only and are available in a variety of flavours to suit individual tastes. Can be used as additional nutrition or added to recipes etc.

5. These can be used to add extra energy and protein instead of ordinary puddings.

6. These can be used to thicken drinks and foods for people who have difficulty in swallowing fluids. Follow the instructions carefully or the products can become lumpy.

Recipe ideas, leaflets and booklets are available for many of these products from the manufacturers.
Sample menus

The following sample menus show how some everyday food can increase your protein and energy intake without having to eat more food.

Obviously, these are only suggestions but we hope that they will give you some ideas on the ways you can adapt the meals you usually eat.

Between meals you can keep up your energy intake with snacks and drinks such as nuts, seeds, cheese, biscuits, crackers, Ovaltine or milkshakes. Fortified milk or supplements such as Fortisip Neutral or Entera Neutral can be added to tea and coffee, or bedtime drinks such as Horlicks, Ovaltine or chocolate. Energy supplements can be added to hot drinks too.
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**Breakfast**
- Soy bean milk
- Porridge
- Toast with butter and honey

**Midday meal**
- Fried rice
- Pork chop
- Fruit yoghurt

**Evening meal**
- Corn soup with grounded chicken
- Steamed fish
- Fresh vegetables
- Fruit salad

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*Note:*
- Spread thickly
- Use full fat variety, add energy supplement
- Make with grounded pork and egg
- With syrup and ice-cream, cream or custard made with fortified milk
**Breakfast**  
Fruit juice  
Live yoghurt with nuts, seeds and dried fruit or porridge

**Midday meal**  
Fried noodles  
Diced chicken with cashew nuts  
Stir fried chinese cabbage with dried shrimp  
Fruit or almond, pear, sweet dates soup

**Evening meal**  
Chicken curry  
Or roast chicken with potatoes  
And fresh vegetables  
Fruit custard with fresh cream

- add energy and protein supplement
- add shredded chicken
- use butter for cooking
- make with fortified milk and energy supplement
Diet and Cancer

Breakfast
- Fresh fruit juice or piece of fruit
- Wholemeal toast with butter and honey or jam

Midday meal
- Vegetable soup with avocado, smoke salmon sandwich
- Salad
- Egg custard

Evening meal
- Grilled fish, potatoes, broccoli in Cheese sauce
- Ice cream and fresh fruit

- add energy and protein supplement
- sprinkle cheese on soup
- made with fortified milk and energy supplement
- spread thickly
- add dressing, mayonnaise or salad cream
- use fortified milk for sauce, add butter to potatoes
Breakfast
Ham and egg
Toast with butter and jam

Midday meal
Chicken soup
Hard-boiled egg sandwich
Fruit or full-fat yoghurt

Evening meal
Chicken with chestnuts
Stir-fried broccoli with garlic
Fried rice
Stewed fruit

Spread butter while still warm
Be generous with the filling, add mayonnaise
Add cream or energy and protein supplement
Serve with cream or custard made with fortified milk
People who have lost their appetites may feel self-conscious about eating at home with the family or eating out with friends. Eating is usually a social event, so even if you feel you cannot manage a full meal, there is no reason for you to feel excluded. Your friends and family will understand and will enjoy being with you, even if you can not eat as much as usual.

Sometimes, perhaps when you are feeling tired or sick, you may not be able to prepare food. If you are the person in your family who usually prepares the meals, it can feel strange to stand back and let someone else take charge. It is important for you not to feel guilty about letting someone else do your tasks when you are unwell. After all, when you feel better again you can always take up your responsibility for cooking once more.

If you live alone and need help with cooking, or around the house generally, contact your GP, district nurse or social worker, so that they can arrange for a home help, meals-on-wheels or a local organisation to help you with cooking or shopping.

Do not hesitate to ask for professional help if you are finding it difficult to cope with your illness and your emotions. Talking about your feelings can often help to clarify your own thoughts and give other people the chance to understand how you are feeling. You may find it helpful to talk to a professional counsellor or a local support group. Call CancerLink Hotline 3656 0800, they can offer some information and assistance.
Do not see it as a sign of failure that you have not been able to cope on your own. Once people understand how you are feeling they can be more supportive.

Your feelings about weight loss

Weight loss is something that often happens to people who have cancer and it can be upsetting because it is a reminder of your illness. It is natural to be upset by weight loss. Over the years, we all develop an image in our minds about what our bodies look like. Although we may not be completely satisfied with this image, most people are used to the way they see themselves.

When you lose weight, perhaps due to the cancer itself or may be the treatment you are having, you will see a different image of yourself when you look in the mirror from the one you have developed in your mind. It can be hard for someone who has seen themselves as well-built and healthy, to accept that they now look different because they have lost weight.

You may also worry that the change in your looks will affect what your partner, family and friends think of you. Weight loss can also be a worry for your friends and family. However, despite of your loss of weight, you are still the same person with the characteristics for which your family and friends value you.

Some people worry that the change in their looks will affect
their personal relationships. You may be worried about rejection or carrying on a sexual relationship. Many people find, once they have summoned up the courage to talk openly to their partner, their fears of rejection are unfounded. Relationships are built on a number of things - love, trust, common experiences and many other feelings. Although weight loss can be distressing for you both, it can help to discuss this openly and talking about the problem may help you feel closer.
Part Two: Eating problems

Apart from a poor appetite and loss of weight, some people with cancer experience other difficulties with eating. Some of these problems may be related to the disease itself, while others may be temporary side effects of the treatment.

In this section, some of the possible difficulties are discussed and some suggestions are given to help you in overcoming them.

Eating difficulties:

- **Sore mouth**
  - Drink plenty of nourishing fluids. If you find fresh fruit juices sting your mouth, try to drink blackcurrant or rose hip syrup, apple juice or peach or pear nectar instead, as these are less acidic. Some pre-prepared, juice-tasting drinks may also be helpful.
  - Cold foods and drinks can be soothing to a sore mouth. Try to add crushed ice to drinks and eating ice cream or soft milk jellies.
• Avoid salty or spicy food which may sting your mouth. Avoid rough textured food like toast or raw vegetables as they can scrape your sore skin.

• Keep your food moist with sauces and gravies.

• Try to drink through a straw. Pineapple chunks clean the mouth and are refreshing.

• Tell your doctor about it. He or she can prescribe some soothing or antiseptic lotions for you.

• Ask your doctor or nurse for advice about a suitable mouthwash. Mouthwashes can be very soothing, but many that you can buy at the local stores may be too strong for you.

• Use a child’s soft toothbrush to clean your teeth gently.

• If you wear dentures, leave them soaking in a denture-cleaning solution overnight and leave them out for as long as you can during the day to prevent them chafing your sore gums. If your tongue is ‘coated’ it may make your food taste unpleasant and might discourage you from eating. You can clean your tongue with a bicarbonate of soda
solution: use one teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda (available from your chemist) dissolved in a pint (60cl) of warm water. Clean your tongue with cotton wool dipped in this solution.

■ **Dry mouth**

- Frequent drinks, even taking just a few sips at a time, can greatly help to keep your mouth moist. You may find fizzy drinks the most refreshing.

- Try sucking ice cubes or ice lollies. Home-made lollies can be easily made by freezing fresh juice in ice-cube trays or in special lolly containers with sticks which can be bought from many kitchen-ware shops or supermarkets.

- Moisten your food with lots of gravy or sauce.

- Avoid chocolate and pastry; they stick to the roof of your mouth.

- Sucking boiled sweets can stimulate your saliva; so can chewing gum.

- Drinking a glass of sherry before a meal.

- Salivix boiled sweets (available from most chemists or on prescription from your doctor) stimulate saliva.

- Tell you doctor about your dry mouth. He or she can prescribe artificial saliva sprays if you think they will help.
• Use lip balm for dry lips.

**Taste changes**

Some people with cancer find that their taste changes, although most changes are only temporary. They may no longer enjoy certain foods or find that all foods taste the same, or they notice a metallic taste in their mouths after chemotherapy. Occasionally, they can not taste anything at all.

If you do have a change in taste, here are some tips for making your food more palatable:

• Concentrate on eating the foods that suit your taste and ignore those that do not appeal to you. However, do try them again after a few weeks, as your taste may have returned to normal.

• Use seasonings and herbs like rosemary, basil, mint and spices to flavour your cooking.

• Try to marinate meat in fruit juices or wine, or dress it in strong sauces like sweet and sour or curry.

• Cold meats may taste better when garnished with pickle or chutney.

• Sharp tasting foods like fresh fruit, fruit juices and bitter boiled sweets, are refreshing and leave a pleasant taste in the mouth.
• Some people might go off the taste of tea or coffee. You could try a refreshing lemon tea instead or perhaps an ice-cold fizzy drink like lemonade.

• Some people find cold foods taste more palatable than hot foods.

• Serve fish, chicken and egg dishes with sauces.

**Too tired to cook or eat**

When this happens, you could rely on quick convenience foods such as frozen meals, tinned foods, boil-in-the-bag meals or take-aways. Remember, though, to defrost frozen foods thoroughly and to cook all foods properly so as to avoid all risk of food poisoning. Read cooking instructions carefully and stick to them. If you know in advance the times you are likely to feel tired, for example, after radiotherapy treatment, then you could try to plan ahead to help you through these times. If you have a freezer, you could prepare...
food while you are feeling active and freeze it, that you do not have to cook when you are more tired. You could stock up on some of the convenience foods as mentioned above. This is also a good opportunity to give friends and family the chance to help you by doing some shopping or cooking.

If you really cannot face eating, have one of the nourishing drinks available from most chemists.

**Constipation**

- Make sure you have plenty of fibre (roughage) in your diet. Bran is particularly effective sprinkled on cereals and soups. Other good sources of fibre include wholewheat breakfast cereals like Weetabix or muesli, wholemeal bread and flour, brown rice, wholemeal pasta, fresh fruit and vegetables with skins on.

- Favourite natural remedies for constipation are syrup of figs and prunes and prune juice.

- Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids. Hot drinks can be helpful. Some people find coffee a powerful laxative.

- Gentle exercise will help to keep your bowels in working order.

- If the constipation persists, tell your doctor who can prescribe a mild laxative or consult a pharmacist who may be able to suggest an over-the-counter remedy.
If you have cancer of the bowel, or you think that your bowel may be affected by your cancer treatment, always ask your doctor or specialist nurse for advice on dealing with constipation.

## Diarrhoea

- While you have diarrhoea it is best to cut down on your fibre intake from fruit and vegetables.

- Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids to replace the water lost with the diarrhoea, but avoid alcohol and coffee. Limit your intake of milk and milk-containing drinks.

- Eat small, frequent meals made from light foods, for example, dairy produce, white fish, poultry, eggs (well cooked), white bread, pasta or rice. Avoid highly spiced or fatty foods and eat your meals slowly.

- Have your fruit stewed or tinned rather than fresh or dried. Bananas are ‘binding’.

- If the diarrhoea persists, tell your doctor, who can prescribe some diarrhoea-relieving drugs for you, or consult a pharmacist.

If your diarrhoea is caused by radiotherapy, changing your diet is unlikely to help, and it is important that you take the anti-diarrhoea medicines prescribed by your doctor. You may also have diarrhoea if you have had surgery for bowel can-
cer. If this happens you should discuss it with your doctor or specialist nurse before changing your diet.

■ **Wind**

• Eat and drink slowly. Take small mouthfuls and chew your food well.

• Avoid food that you think gives you wind, for example, beans, pickles and fizzy drinks.

• A favourite natural remedy is to drink two teaspoonfuls of peppermint water dissolved in a small cup of hot water. If you like, sweeten it with a teaspoonful of sugar.

• You could try taking charcoal tablets, available from your chemist.

• Gentle exercise, especially walking, can bring some relief.

• If the pain becomes severe or persistent, tell your doctor.

■ **Feeling sick**

• If the smell of cooking makes you feel sick, eat cold meals or food from the freezer that only needs heating up (but remember to defrost it thoroughly before cooking, and to make sure it is properly cooked).

• Alternatively, let someone else do the cooking

• Avoid greasy, fatty or fried foods.
• Try eating some dry food, such as toast or crackers, first thing in the morning before you get up.

• When you feel sick, start off by eating light foods like thin soups or egg custards and gradually introduce small portions of your favourite foods, slowly building up to a more substantial diet.

• Sipping a fizzy drink is a popular remedy for feeling sick. Try mineral water, ginger ale, lemonade or soda water and sip it slowly through a straw.

• Try having drinks between meals rather than with your food.

• Ask your doctor to prescribe you some anti-sickness tablets (anti-emetics).

■ Difficulty in chewing or swallowing

Soft diets can become boring when people tend to rely on soup and ice cream. But with a little imagination and effort, a soft diet can be both appetising and nutritious.

The golden rule is to eat your favourite foods, but make changes which will soften them. For example, dress foods in tasty sauces and gravies, finely chop meat and vegetables and casserole or stew them, and cut the crusts off bread for softer sandwiches. If you have access to a blender, you could blend or liquidise cooked foods.
There are several commercial products available that you may find them helpful, both in terms of convenience and variety. These products can be obtained from your chemist. Your doctor may offer you a prescription for some of them.

• Some soft nutritious foods

  Home-made soups
  Milk puddings, Scrambled eggs (well cooked), Poached or flaked fish in a sauce
  Stewed or pureed fruit
  Shepherd's pie
  Pasta dishes
  Pancakes
  Braised meat
  Egg custard
  Porridge
  Cottage cheese
  Grated cheese
  Jelly made with milk
  Yoghurts

■ Poor appetite

• Eat a little as often as possible if you cannot face big meals. Try to have a small portion of food every two hours during the day.

• Tempt your taste buds by making your food look as attrac-
tive as possible. Put small portions on your plate and garnish the food with lemon, tomato or parsley.

• Have glass of sherry or brandy half an hour before a meal is a good way of stimulating your appetite. Some people find a glass of wine with their meals helps their digestion.

• Keep snacks handy to nibble whenever you can. Bags of nuts, crisps, dried fruit or a bowl of grated cheese are quite light and tasty. If these are hard for you to swallow, a yoghurt or fromage frais may slip down more easily.

• Sweet or savoury nourishing drinks can be used to replace small meals.

• Eat your meals slowly, chew the food well and relax for a little while after each meal.

• Sometimes the smell of food cooking can be appetising, but occasionally it can put you off eating. If cooking smells ruin your appetite, keep away from the kitchen and ask your family or friends to cook, or eat cold foods presented attractively.

• Everyone’s appetite fluctuates between good and bad days. Make the most of the good days by eating well and treating yourself to your favourite foods.

• Have your meals in a room where you feel relaxed and without distractions.
Special eating problems

Some people with cancer may have special eating problems that are not covered by this booklet. For example, people with a colostomy or ileostomy or laryngectomy need to follow a special diet individually designed for them. Advice about these diets can be obtained from your doctor / dietician or call the Hong Kong Cancer Fund on 2868 0780 for information on special needs support groups such as the Stoma Association or New Voice Club.
So far, this booklet has dealt with the eating problems of people with cancer who have lost weight or have poor appetites. However, there are many people with cancer who never lose weight or have no difficulties with eating. For others, eating problems are only a temporary effect of their treatment and most of the time they can eat well.

This Healthy Eating section provides sound nutritional advice for people with cancer, but with no weight loss or eating problems and also for anyone without eating problems but wants to follow a healthy diet, live a fuller life and feel better. In the long term this diet may reduce the chances of getting heart disease and diabetes as well as certain types of cancer.

Some of the advice given in this section may seem to contradict with those given in the Building-up Diet in Part One. The advice given in previous section is for specific groups of people with cancer and are eating very little or are losing weight and is not recommended for people who can eat normally.

Recently, there have been several reports concerned with improving the diet of people in Hong Kong. The following section is a summary of that advice.
Healthy Eating Rules

1. *Watch your weight*

Try to maintain your weight within the normal range for your height (your family doctor can advise you on your normal weight). If you are overweight, reduce your energy intake by eating less fat and sugary foods. This allows your body to use up its surplus energy which is stored as fat.

2. *Eat less fat*

Many experts agree that nowadays people eat too much fatty food. Instead of getting energy from starchy foods like bread and potatoes, they rely too much on animal fats such as red meat, eggs, butter and cheese.

What can you do from eating less fat?

- Eat more fish and poultry rather than red meat.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim off all the fat whenever you can. Remove the skin from poultry.
- Eat less fried food - bake, grill, steam or poach food instead.
• Buy skimmed or semi-skimmed milk.

• Try the low-fat varieties of margarine, butter, yoghurt and cheese.

• Cut out or reduce the number of fatty take-aways (e.g. fish and chips, burgers, sausages) that you eat.

• Avoid snacks which are high in fat, such as crisps and biscuits.

3. Eat more vegetables, fruit and cereals

Vegetables, fruit and cereals are all rich in fibre and vitamins. Fibre is sometimes called roughage. It is the part of the food which passes through the body without being completely absorbed, and keeps the gut healthy.

Some experts say we should be eating half as much fibre again as we eat now. Try to eat fresh fruit and vegetables each day, particularly dark green and dark yellow vegetables like

• Spinach

• Greens

• Sweet potato

• Broccoli

• Carrots
These contain substances called antioxidants which can play a part in preventing cancer from developing. Tea and green tea also contain antioxidants.

High-fibre foods

- Fresh fruit with the skins left on where possible.
- Fresh vegetables, including potatoes, especially with the skins left on.
- Wholegrain cereals, for example, brown rice.
- Wholemeal pasta and noodles.
- Wholemeal bread.
- Dried fruit, especially prunes.
- High fibre breakfast cereals like muesli, Weetabix, bran flakes or porridge. Bran can be sprinkled onto cereals to increase the fibre.

4. Cut down on sugar

Sugar contains no useful nutrients apart from energy and we can get all the energy we need from healthier sources. On the average we consume 84lbs (38kg) of sugar per person per year! Most of this is unnecessary and is partly responsible for tooth decay and obesity.

- Learn to do without sugar in hot drinks or switch to an arti-
ficial sweetener.

• Cut down on cakes, sweets and chocolates.

• Have fresh fruit instead of puddings. Sweeten stewed fruit with sweeteners.

• Choose foods with less or no added sugar, for example, tinned fruit in natural juices and low calorie drinks. Try sugar-free jellies, diet yoghurt.

5. Cut down on salt

Most people eat much more salt than they need. Most foods are salted during cooking and manufactured foods contain a lot of added salt. Some experts say we should all aim to cut down our overall salt intake by about a quarter.

• Reduce the amount of salt in your cooking and try to avoid adding it at the table.

• Cut down on snacks with a high salt content like crisps or salted nuts.

• Try to use low salt manufactured products, and low salt or unsalted butter or spreads.

6. Be sensible with alcohol

Regularly drinking large amount of alcohol has been linked
with a variety of cancers, including breast, gullet (oesophagus), and liver, as well as head and neck cancers.

However, moderate amount of alcohol, as part of a well-balanced diet, have been shown to reduce the risk of some cancers, such as prostate cancer, as well as helping to reduce the risk of heart disease or stroke.

Current sensible drinking guidelines recommend that:

• men drink no more than 3 units of alcohol per day, or 21 per week

• and women drink no more than 2 units per day, or 14 per week.

One unit of alcohol is the equivalent of a small glass of wine (125ml), half a pint of standard strength beer or lager, or a single measure (25ml) of a standard strength spirits.

Drinking large quantities of alcohol in one session, binge drinking, is thought to be worse for your health than drinking a small amount each day. It is also recommended that people have 1 or 2 non-drinking days each week.
Food hygiene

Be particularly careful about food hygiene. If your immune system is not working well, you may be more susceptible to food poisoning. If your body is weakened by the cancer or its treatment, you may be less able to cope with the symptoms of food poisoning at this time.

Hygiene tips

• Wash your hands before you touch food, and keep pets out of the kitchen.

• Clean cooking utensils and chopping boards thoroughly.

• Wipe worktops with an antibacterial detergent, and wash or replace kitchen cloths frequently.

• If you decide to store food for future use, let it cool completely and store it in the fridge. Only reheat food once, and whichever method you use to reheat food, ensure that it is piping hot right through before eating. Take care not to burn your mouth or tongue if food is reheated in the microwave, as it may remain extremely hot on the inside even though it has cooled on the outside.
Alternative Diets

Alternative diets for treating cancer have received much publicity over the past few years. You may have heard about diets that advise cancer patients not to eat meat and suggest drinking large amount of carrot juice. Some recommend taking large doses of vitamins.

Many dramatic claims for cures of people with advanced cancer have been made and it is completely understandable that people with cancer should be attracted to diets which offer the hope of a cure. However, there is no scientific evidence that these diets cause the cancer to shrink, increase a person’s chance of survival or indeed cure the disease. As these diets have not as yet been properly studied, their real effect is uncertain. Some people do get pleasure and satisfaction from preparing these special diets, but others find them quite boring and even unpleasant to eat and time-consuming to prepare. A further problem is that some of the alternative diets are very expensive, and some can cause people to lose a lot of weight.

It can be very confusing with conflicting advice about what to eat, but most doctors recommend a well-balanced diet and one that you enjoy, as described in this booklet. If you have any queries about these diets or are thinking of following one, ask your doctor’s or dietitian’s advice.
Who can help?

The most important thing to remember is that there are people available to help you and your family. Often it is easier to talk to someone who is not directly involved with your illness. You may find it helpful to talk to a counsellor who is specially trained to offer support and advice. Many people also find great comfort in their religion at this time. Hong Kong Cancer Fund is always willing to discuss any problems that you might have and we can put you in touch with a counsellor or a support group.
Hong Kong Cancer Fund Service Network

Our six “Cancer Patients’ Resource Centres” in major public hospitals and the two CancerLinks Support Centres in the community provide free counselling, support and information to those in need. Together they form a seamless service network that meet the needs of those living with cancer at different stages of their cancer journey.

■ Cancer Patients’ Resource Centres

There are altogether six Cancer Patients’ Resource Centres within the oncology departments of the major public hospitals. They are often the first point of contact for support and information after a diagnosis. The centres provide cancer information, emotional support, counselling and guidance to those in need.

■ CancerLinks

We have two care centres outside the hospital setting which cater to the specific needs of cancer patients throughout different stages of their diagnosis. CancerLink Central offers a well designed holistic rehabilitation programme which emphasizes individual needs while CancerLink Wong Tai Sin is the home to 14 support groups and is the centre for peer sharing and group activities.
Care specialists including registered social workers, oncology nurses, counsellors and therapists are on board to provide support, information and specialised services.

Programmes in our care centres are carefully designed to meet different needs. Private and group counselling are conducted by registered professionals to help patients and families deal with different emotional aspects during their course of treatment. There are also courses to develop coping skills, relaxation classes to help relieve mental and physical stress, and peer support groups for experience sharing. There is also a well-stocked library in each centre, with rehabilitation equipment ready for use or loan.

Whether you are seeking self-help information or group support, choices are always available.

■ **Hotline**

Our hotline receives thousands of calls every year. It is supervised by professionals who share and give advice on both physical and emotional difficulties faced by patients and their families. Talking with someone who understands can make a huge difference.

Hotline : 3656 0800
Appendix

Hong Kong Cancer Fund Support Network

CancerLink Care Centres
CancerLink Central
Unit 3, G/F., The Center, 99 Queen’s Road Central, Hong Kong
Tel: 3667 3000   Fax: 3667 3100   Email: canlinkcentral@hkcf.org

CancerLink Wong Tai Sin
Unit 2-8, G/F., Wing C, Lung Cheong House, Lower Wong Tai Sin Estate, Kowloon
Hotline: 3656 0800  Tel: 3656 0700  Fax: 3656 0900  Email: canlink@hkcf.org

CanSurvive (English-speaking Support Group)
Tel: 2868 0780  Hotline: 2328 2202  Fax: 2524 9023

Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital
Cancer Patients’ Resource Centre
Level L1, Radiotherapy & Oncology Department, 3 Lok Man Road, Chai Wan, Hong Kong
Tel: 2595 4165 Fax: 2557 1005

Queen Mary Hospital
Cancer Centre
2/F., Professorial Block, 102 Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
Tel: 2855 3725  Fax: 2855 3901

Prince of Wales Hospital
Cancer Patients’ Resource Centre
3/F., Sir Yue Kong Pao Cancer Centre, 30-32 Ngan Shing Street, Shatin, NT
Tel: 2632 4030  Fax: 2636 4752

Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Cancer Patients’ Resource Centre
Room 601, Block R, 30 Gascoigne Road, Kowloon
Tel: 2958 5393  Fax: 2332 458

Tuen Mun Hospital
Cancer Patients’ Resource Centre
Tsing Chung Koon Road, Tuen Mun, NT
Tel: 2468 5045  Fax: 2455 7449

Princess Margaret Hospital
Cancer Patients’ Resource Centre
2/F. & 3/F., Block H, 2-10 Princess Margaret Hospital Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon

Kwong Wah Hospital
The Breast Centre
Department of Surgery
1/F., South Wing, 25 Waterloo Road, Kowloon
Tel/Fax: 3517 5240
Other Helpful Organizations in Hong Kong

Social Welfare Department
Hotline: 2343 2255

Rehabaid Centre
Tel: 2364 2345   Fax: 2764 5038

The Samaritans
(24-hour Multi-Lingual Suicide Prevention Hotline)
Tel:  2896 0000 (English)  2382 0000 (Chinese)

Domestic Helpers
(via The HK Council of Social Service)
Tel: 2864 2857   Fax: 2865 4916

The Chain of Charity Movement
Community Support & Escorting Service
(can arrange visits, transportation to hospitals and shopping etc.)
Tel: 2560 6299   Fax: 2777 2269

Government Ambulance Service
Tel: 2735 3355

Easy Access Bus
(can arrange visits, transportation to & from hospitals / clinics for those 60 or above with movement difficulties)
Tel: 2348 0608

St. John Ambulance (24-hour service)
Tel: 2576 6555 (Hong Kong)   2713 5555 (Kowloon)

The Jessie and Thomas Tam Centre
(to provide bereavement counselling service)
Tel: 2725 7693   Fax: 2304 2277

Comfort Care Concern Group
(to provide bereavement counselling for terminally-ill patients and their families)
Tel: 2361 6606   Fax: 2361 6294

Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care
(Provide bereavement counselling service)
Tel: 2868 1211   Fax: 2530 3290
Website: www.hospicecare.org.hk
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Please complete the form in BLOCK LETTERS and return to us by post to The Hong Kong Cancer Fund, Room 2501, Kinwick Centre, 32 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong, or fax the form to 2524 9023.

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