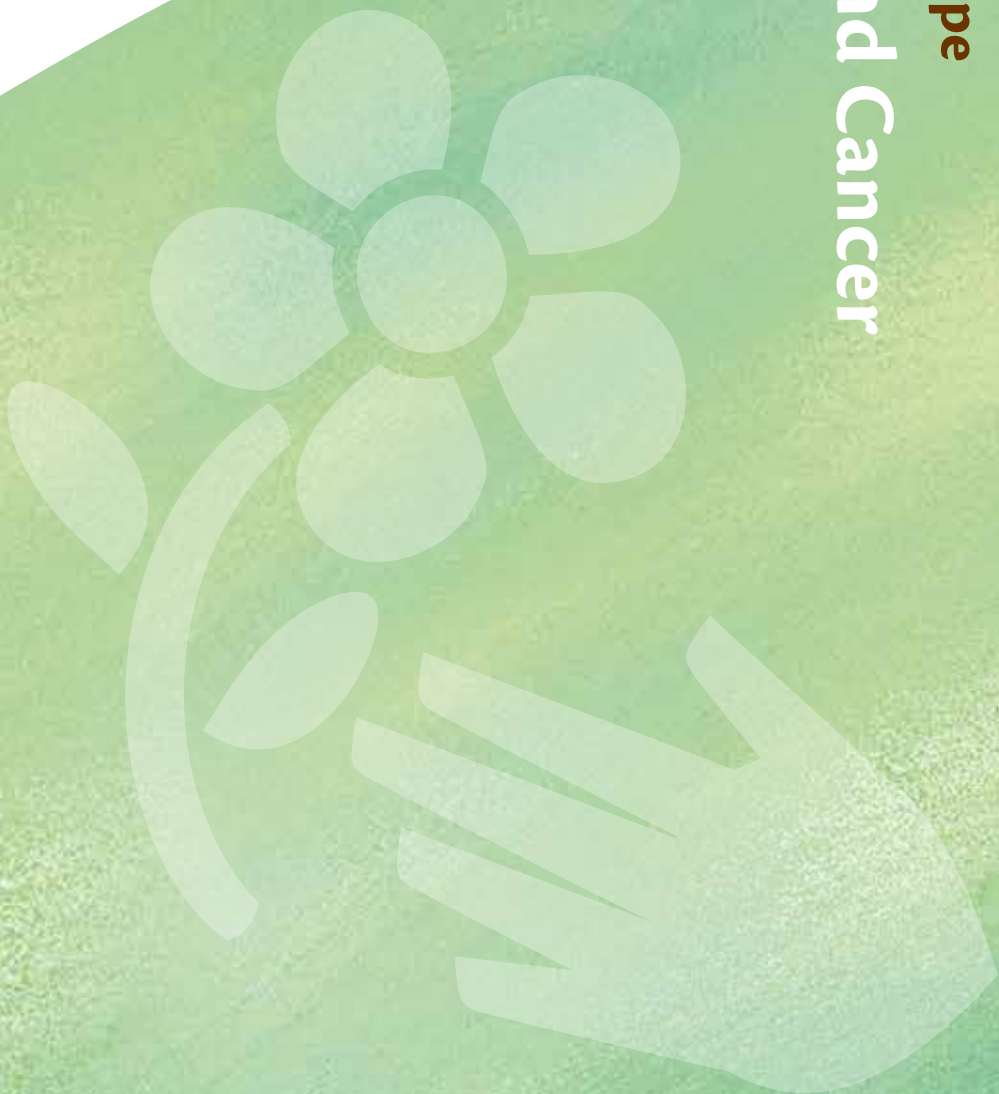




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CANCERFUND
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how to cope

Diet and Cancer





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 the community.

Our CancerLink support centres offer professional support and connect 22 cancer peer groups to form an extensive service network for those with cancer and their families, providing emotional support and practical assistance.

This publication is one in a series of information booklets that discuss different aspects of cancer, including possible treatment, side effects and emotional issues. They are intended to inform you about available treatments and care. A soft copy of the booklet is also available on our website for free download.

The free services offered by Hong Kong Cancer Fund are made possible only through donations from the public. If you would like to show your support and concern for cancer clients, please contact us. Your generosity will directly benefit those touched by cancer in Hong Kong.

So no one faces cancer alone

FREE service hotline

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Introduction

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 recommend this booklet so they can better understand your need.

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 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 part provides helpful tips for cancer patients with temporary eating problems caused by their treatment. For example, you may experience mouth ulcers due to radiotherapy or are too tired to prepare a 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.



Part One:

The building-up 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. In this part, we will show you how to gain more energy and protein without taking in more food. Not everyone will be able to put on weight with this building-up diet, but the following tips 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*

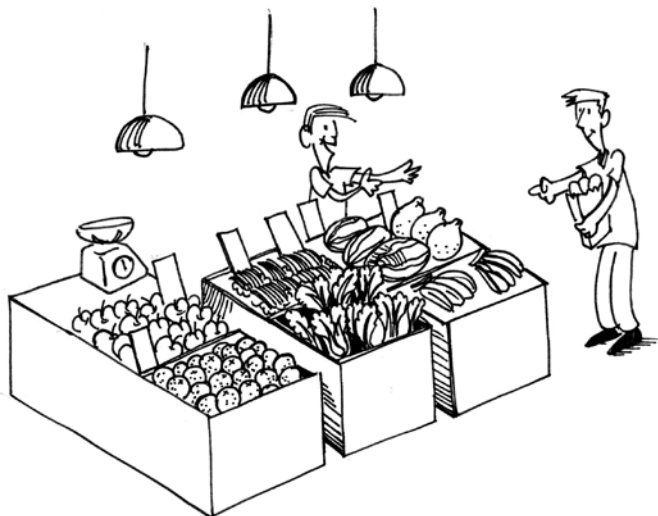
Fresh fruit and vegetables are sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre which can be taken raw or lightly cooked, or made into juice.

Vitamins are essential substances which help our bodies to work normally, but we only need a 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 multivitamin supplements to top up. Your doctor, dietitian, nurse or pharmacist can give you practical advice if this is necessary. There is no scientific evidence to prove that taking large amount of vitamins can boost your health. 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 bone and teeth formation, maintaining body fluids and tissues, maintaining healthy nerves and building necessary chemicals, e.g. enzymes.

Some minerals are required in larger amounts than others, such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, potassium and chlorine. Others are required in small quantities and are called trace minerals, e.g. iron, zinc, iodine, fluoride, selenium and copper. Despite the fact that a smaller amount is needed, trace minerals are also as important



as other minerals.

Different foods supply different amounts of minerals. Having a diet with variety ensures an adequate supply of 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 have to consume protein every day to maintain and repair our body tissues. Our body must have protein reserve, as well as extra energy, when we are ill, injured or under stress in order to repair any damage.

- *Fats*

Sources of fat include oil, butter, margarine, fatty meat, 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. These foods may 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, simply sitting on a chair requires energy to maintain our posture and breathing. If the calories are inadequate, we start to use stored energy and lose weight. The amount of energy each person needs per day varies. It depends on how quickly the body uses the energy and the level of activity. A man and a woman need approximately 2,500 kcal and 2,000kcal respectively every day.

- *Fluids*

Our body needs a certain amount of fluid every day in order to function properly. If you do not feel well it may be difficult to take enough liquid, but it is important to drink at least 1.5 litres of fluid a day (2 pints). This can be taken as water, fruit juice or soup. Drinks that contain caffeine (such as coffee, tea and some fizzy drinks) may make you dehydrated because caffeine is a diuretic and can make you produce more urine.

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.

If you are a diabetic, you should always seek advice from your doctor or dietitian before using food supplements. High energy and juice tasting supplements have a high carbohydrate (sugar) content and are therefore not usually suitable for diabetics.

There are many food supplements available in the market, which add extra energy and/or protein to your diet. You can usually get them from local pharmacies. Some are available with a doctor's prescription only. Some supplements are ready to drink while others need mixing with water. You can include them in your cooked food as well.

How to add extra energy and protein to everyday food?

■ *Fortified milk*

Add two tablespoons of dried milk powder to a pint (500 ml) of full cream milk. Keep it in the fridge and use it in drinks and cooking. Use this fortified full cream milk instead of water to to make soup, jelly, custard and pudding.

■ *Breakfast cereals*

Use fortified milk. Add syrup or honey to porridge or use 2-3 teaspoons of a high-energy supplement instead of sugar or salt. Make porridge with full cream 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.

■ *Nibbles*

Keep snacks like nuts, fresh and dried fruit, biscuits, crackers, yoghurts or fromage frais handy to nibble on 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 nutrition supplements.

■ *Mashed potato*

Mashed potato can be enriched by adding two teaspoons of butter or cream and by sprinkling grated cheese on top. High energy and protein supplements can also be added.

■ *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 thick fillings. Add two teaspoons 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 teaspoons of high energy supplement to hot or cold drinks.

Nourishing drinks

Sometimes you may not want a full meal, try a nourishing drink instead. You can also drink these between meals to help put on some weight. Some people like an occasional glass of stout to boost 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 fruit yoghurt and add 2-3 teaspoons of high-energy powder supplement. A scoop of ice cream will top it off tastily, and add extra energy. These drinks are easy to get from chemists or some supermarkets.

■ *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 prescribe you one. Look for supplements that are nutritionally balanced, so occasionally you can have them to replace a meal if you do not feel like eating.

■ *Powdered drinks*

Some balanced and flavoured-meal drinks are available as powders which can be mixed with milk or water.

■ *Powders which can be added to food*

There are also unflavoured powders available to buy or on prescription. You can find energy-only and protein-only powders.

Since these powders are 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 to a pint (500ml) of full-cream milk. Alternatively 2-3 teaspoons of an energy supplement can be added to a cup of tea or coffee.

Sample menus

The following sample menus show how some everyday food can increase your protein and energy intake without needing to consume more food. We hope that the suggestions here can give you some ideas on how to adapt the tips on your daily meal.

Between meals you can increase your energy intake with snacks and drinks such as nuts, seeds, cheese, biscuits, crackers, or milkshakes. Fortified milk or supplements can be added to tea and coffee, or bedtime drinks such as malted or chocolate milk. Energy supplements can be added to hot drinks too.



Breakfast

Soy bean milk

Porridge

Toast with butter and honey

make with
ground pork
and egg

spread thickly

Midday meal

Fried rice

Pork chop

Fruit yoghurt

use full fat yoghurt,
add energy supplement

Evening meal

Corn soup with ground chicken

Steamed fish

Fresh vegetables

Fruit salad

with syrup and
ice-cream,
cream of custard
made with
fortified milk





Breakfast

Fruit juice

Live yoghurt with nuts, seeds and dried

Fruit or porridge

add energy
and protein
supplement

add shredded
chicken

Midday meal

Fried noodles

Diced chicken with cashew nuts

Stir fried chinese cabbage with dried shrimp

Fruit or almond, pear, sweet dates soup

make with fortified
milk and energy
supplement

Evening meal

Chicken curry

Or roast chicken with potatoes

And fresh vegetables

Fruit custard with fresh cream





Breakfast

add energy
and protein
supplement

Fresh fruit juice or piece of fruit

Wholemeal toast
with butter and honey or jam

spread thickly

Midday meal

spinkle cheese
on soup

Vegetable soup with avocado,
smoke salmon sandwich

Salad

add dressinh,
mayonnaise or
salad cream

Egg custard

Evening meal

Grilled fish, potatoes, broccoli in
Cheese sauce

use fortified milk
for sauce, add butter to
potatoes

made with
fortified milk
and energy
supplement

Ice cream and fresh fruit





Breakfast

Ham and egg

Toast with butter and jam

spread butter
while still warm

Midday meal

Chicken soup

add cream or
energy and
protein
supplement

Hard-boiled egg sandwich

be generous
with the filling,
add mayonnaise

Fruit or full-fat yoghurt

Evening meal

Chicken with chestnuts

Stir-fired broccoli with garlic

Fried rice

serve with cream
or custard made
with fortified milk

Stewed fruit



Your feelings about eating

People who have lost their appetites may want to eat at home with the family or dine 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 be excluded. Your friends and family will understand and will enjoy being with you, even if you cannot 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 one in charge of preparing meals for the family, you may feel odd that someone else is replacing your family role. 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 again.

If you live alone and need help with cooking, or around the house generally, contact your doctor, nurse or hospital social worker, so they can arrange for a local organisation to help you with cooking or shopping.

Do not hesitate to ask for professional assistance if you find it difficult to cope with your illness and emotion. 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 support group. Call our service hotline 3656 0800, our oncology nurses, social workers and dietitian can offer practical advice and reliable information.

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 feel, they can be more supportive.

Your feelings about weight loss

Weight loss is something that often occurs in people who have cancer and it can be upsetting because it is a reminder of your illness. Over the years, we develop an image in our minds about how our bodies look. 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 maybe 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 worry your friends and family. However, despite your weight loss, you are still the same person with the personality your family and friends value.

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 to talk about the problem, which in turn may help you two 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 to overcome them.

Eating difficulties:

■ *Sore mouth*

- Drink plenty of nourishing fluids. If you find fresh fruit juices sting your mouth, try to drink apple juice, blackcurrant or rose hip syrup, peach or pear nectar instead, as these are less acidic. Some ready-to-drink and flavoured 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 with a straw.
- 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 those available at the local stores may be too strong for you.
- Use a children's 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 soda solution: use one teaspoon of bicarbonate soda (available from your chemist) dissolved in a pint (500 ml) of warm water. Clean your tongue with gauze dipped in this solution.



■ *Dry mouth*

- Drinking frequently 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 gravies or sauces.
- Avoid chocolate and pastry; they stick to the roof of your mouth.
- Sucking boiled sweets can stimulate your saliva.
- Drink a glass of sherry before meal.
- Chewing gum can stimulate saliva.
- Tell your doctor about your dry mouth. He or she can prescribe artificial saliva sprays if you think this can 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 may notice a metallic taste in their mouths after chemotherapy. Occasionally, they cannot taste anything at all.

If you notice 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 iced fizzy drink like lemonade.
- Serve fish, chicken and egg dishes with sauces.

■ *Too tired to cook or eat*

When this happens, you could rely on convenience foods such as frozen meals, canned foods, boil-in-the-bag meals or take-away. Remember, defrost frozen foods properly and cook foods thoroughly to avoid the risk of food poisoning. Read cooking instructions carefully and follow through. 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, then you can simply re-heat the dishes when you feel 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 manage eating, have one of the nourishing drinks available from most chemists.

■ *Constipation*

- Make sure you have plenty of fibre in your diet. You can sprinkle bran on cereals and soups. Other good sources of fibre include breakfast cereals like muesli, wholewheat bread, pasta and flour, brown rice, fresh vegetables and fruit with skin on.
- Favourite natural remedies for constipation are figs, 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 to 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 your fibre intake from fruit and vegetables.
- Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids to replace the water lost from 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, white fish, poultry, eggs (well cooked), white bread, pasta or rice. Avoid spiced or fatty foods and eat your meals slowly.
- Have your fruit stewed or tinned rather than fresh or dried. Bananas and apples bind you when you have diarrhoea.
- 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 cancer. If this happens you should discuss it with your doctor or specialist nurse before changing your diet.

■ *Bloating and 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 natural remedy is to add two teaspoons of peppermint in a small cup of hot water and drink it. You may also add a teaspoon of sugar to make it sweet.
- 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. 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 porridge. But with a little imagination and effort, a soft diet can be both appealing 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, casserole or stew finely chopped meat and vegetables, and cut the crusts off bread for softer sandwiches. If you have access to a blender, you could blend or liquidise cooked foods to make a delicious soup.

Some suggested soft nutritious foods:

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

■ *Poor appetite*

- Consume small portions of food as often as possible if you cannot take a full meal at a time. Try to have a small portion of food every two hours during the day.
- Make food more appealing by creating an attractive looking meal. Put small portions on your plate and garnish the food with lemon, tomato or parsley.
- Drinking a glass of sherry or brandy half an hour before a meal is a good way to stimulate your appetite. Some people find a glass of wine with their meals helps their digestion.
- Keep snacks handy to nibble on whenever you can. Bags of nuts, 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 instead.

- Everyone's appetite fluctuates between good and bad days. Make the most of the good days by eating well and treating yourself with your favourite foods.
- Have your meals in a setting 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 / dietitian or by calling our service hotline on 3656 0800 for information on special needs support groups such as the Hong Kong Stoma Association or New Voice Club of Hong Kong.



Part Three:

A healthy eating guide

We have dealt in the previous section with the eating problems of people with cancer who have lost weight or poor appetites. Still, 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 who have 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 the information provided in the Building-up Diet in part one. The advice given in that section is for specific groups of people with cancer who are eating very little or are losing weight. It is not recommended for people who can eat normally.

The following section is a summary on how to improve your diet in a healthier way.

Healthy Eating Rules

1. Monitor your weight

Try to maintain your weight within the normal range for your height according to the Body Mass Index (BMI). If you are overweight, reduce your calorie intake by eating less fat and sweet 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, butter and cheese.

What can you do to eat less fat?

- Eat more white meat like fish 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 amount of fatty take-away food you can eat (e.g. fish and chips, burgers, sausages).
- Avoid snacks that 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 eat fresh fruit and vegetables daily, 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 lowering the risk of cancer.

You should also consume more high-fibre foods:

- Fresh fruit with the skin left on where possible
- Fresh vegetables, including potatoes, especially with the skin left on

- Wholegrain cereals, for example, brown rice
- Wholewheat bread, pasta and noodles
- Dried fruit, especially prunes.
- High fibre breakfast cereals like muesli, bran flakes or porridge
- Bran can be sprinkled onto cereals to increase the fibre intake.

4. *Cut down sugar intake*

Sugar contains no useful nutrients apart from energy and we can get the energy required from other healthier sources. On average, every person consumes 84 lbs (38 kg) of sugar in a year! Most of this is unnecessary and can lead to tooth decay and obesity.

- Learn to take drinks without sugar or switch to an artificial sweetener.
- Cut down intake of cakes, sweets and chocolates.
- Have fresh fruit instead of puddings.
- Choose foods with less or no added sugar, for example, tinned fruit in natural juices and low calorie drinks. Try sugar- free jellies and yoghurt.

5. *Cut down on salt*

Most people eat much more salt than they need. Most foods are marinated with salt before 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*

Alcohol is classified as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1) by WHO, because there is sufficient evidence that the consumption of alcoholic drinks can cause a variety of cancers, including head and neck, breast, oesophagus, colorectal and liver cancers.

Considering the cancer-causing effect, there is no threshold for which alcohol can be consumed safely.

Try to switch to non-alcoholic beverage like fruit punches, tea, and fresh juices instead of alcohol.

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 have a new kitchen cloth 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 high doses of vitamins.

Many dramatic claims of cures for people with advanced cancer have been made and it is completely understandable that people with cancer would be attracted to diets which offer the hope of a cure. However, there is no scientific evidence that these diets can cause the tumour to shrink, increase a person's chance of survival or cure the disease. As these diets have not as yet been properly studied, their actual effect is uncertain. Some people get pleasure and satisfaction from preparing these special diets, but others find them unpleasant to eat and time-consuming to prepare. Another problem is that some of the alternative diets can be expensive, and some may 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 or dietitian for 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. Staff at Hong Kong Cancer Fund are always willing to discuss any problems that you might have and can put you in touch with a counsellor or a support group. Call us on 3656 0800 for more information.

Hong Kong Cancer Fund service network

Our five CancerLink support centres and seven cancer patient resource centres in major public hospitals provide free counselling, support and information to those in need. Together they form a seamless service network that meets the needs of people at different stages of their cancer journey.

- **CancerLink support centres**

We have five support centres outside the hospital setting that cater to the specific needs of those with cancer throughout the different stages of their illness. The centres – located in Central, North Point, Wong Tai Sin, Tin Shui Wai, and Kwai Chung – offer well-designed, holistic rehabilitation programmes that emphasise individual needs.

We also provide backing to 22 support groups, helping them to share resources so as to offer the best services to people living with cancer and their families. Our volunteer groups, formed by cancer survivors, pay visits to hospitals to provide emotional relief. More than 18,000 participants have joined our support network, which is divided into three groups – one for those with cancer, another for those with

specific types of cancer (such as breast cancer, colorectal cancer and nasopharyngeal cancer), and another group for English speakers.

Care specialists – including registered social workers, registered nurses, registered dietitians, art therapists, counsellors and professional volunteers – are available to provide support, information and specialised services.

Private and family counselling is conducted by registered professionals to help those touched by cancer, their families and caregivers deal with the different emotional aspects experienced over the course of treatment.

There are also programmes and rehabilitation classes to develop coping skills, relaxation classes to help relieve mental and physical stress, and dietetic support to provide advice on nutrition.

Our comprehensive range of wellness programmes and therapeutic workshops helps users relax, tackle negative emotions, relieve stress, and restore confidence. We provide free classes, ranging from yoga and meditation to horticulture and insomnia management. The centres also feature well-stocked libraries.

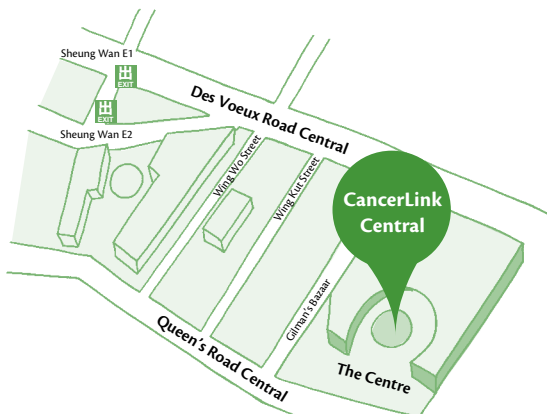
“I managed to go through treatment but was worried about a relapse. A feeling of loneliness was haunting me. I felt especially grateful to have my support group, the members of which stood by me all the time.”

CancerLink support centre user

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The contents of the booklet are correct as of print

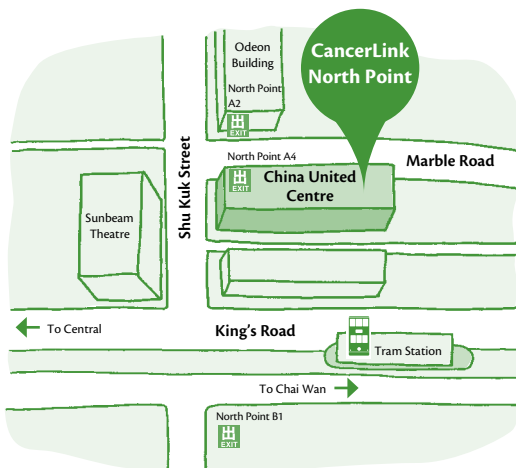
Hong Kong Cancer Fund CancerLink support centres



CancerLink Central

Unit 5, Ground Floor, The Centre,
99 Queen's Road Central,
Hong Kong
(MTR Sheung Wan Station Exit E1/E2)

Email: canlinkcentral@hkcf.org



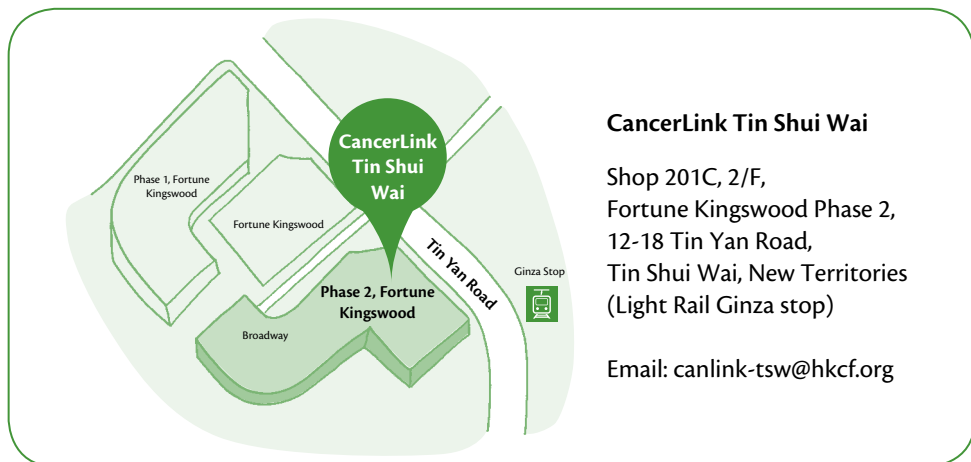
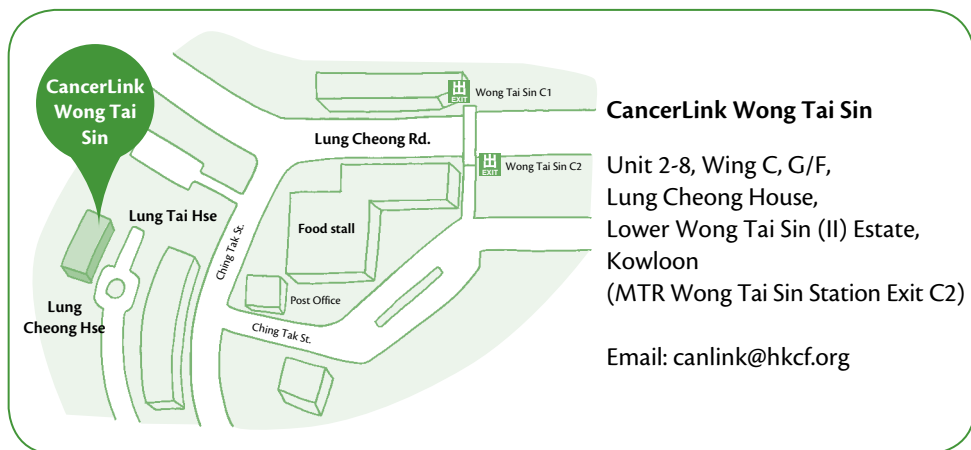
CancerLink North Point

2201-03, China United Centre,
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North Point, Hong Kong
(MTR North Point Station Exit A4)

Email: canlinkcentral@hkcf.org

Special Thanks

SATINU
RESOURCES GROUP LIMITED





CancerLink Jockey Club Support Centre, Kwai Chung

3/F, TLP132, 132-134 Tai Lin Pai Road, Kwai Chung, New Territories
(MTR Kwai Fong Station Exit A)

Email: canlink-kcc@hkcf.org



Green Minibus Station
(Kwai Chung Road)

94, 302, 313



Kwai Fong Estate Bus Station
(Kwai Chung Road, opposite to Kwai Fong Estate/Outside Yee Lim Factory Building)

237A, 265M, 269A, 269M, 290, 290A, 33A, 36A, 38A, 40, 46P, 46X, 57M, 59A, 61M, 935



Kwai Fong Estate Bus Station
(Kwai Chung Road, near Kwai Yik Road)

240X, 260C, 265M, 269M, 46P, 46X, 47X, 57M, 58M, 58P, 59A, 67M, 269P

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Fu Tak Lam Foundation Limited

We are grateful to the Fu Tak Lam Foundation Limited for their sponsorship of this cancer booklet.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Hong Kong Cancer Fund

Service hotline: 3656 0800

Donation hotline: 3667 6333

Website: www.cancer-fund.org



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