

Tips for Maintaining Weight While Undergoing GYN Radiation Treatments

Weight maintenance during cancer treatment is important to avoid delays or dose reductions in planned therapy. It's also important to support adequate healing and recovery. Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, and decreased appetite may prevent you from eating well and maintaining your weight. If you are experiencing any excessive gas, bloating, cramping, or diarrhea try to limit/avoid dairy products and fried/spicy foods; low-fat or fat-free foods may be tolerated better. ***See symptom management handout for more information.***

Tips for Decreased Appetite:

- Eat 6-8 small meals/snacks throughout the day instead of 3 large meals.
- Fill Ziploc[®] bags with high-calorie, high-protein snacks, such as trail mix, peanut butter crackers, and cereal. Prepare in bulk when you feel best and keep them ready in your refrigerator or pantry.
- Eat the most when you feel hungriest and drink beverages in between your meals.
- Get regular exercise and movement.
- Take snacks with you, wherever you go.

Nutritional Supplements

Try to choose a supplement with at least 350 calories per bottle. Ensure[®] Plus and BOOST[®] Plus can be found at most grocery stores and pharmacies. If you are experiencing diarrhea and are unable to tolerate dairy, Orgain[®] Protein, Kate Farms[®], or Owyn[®] Complete Nutrition shakes are great options.



- Blend supplements with ice cream or a banana and peanut butter to increase calories and protein.
- Try to drink a supplement as a snack rather than as a meal.

Increase Protein Intake

Protein is essential for building and repairing cells and maintaining muscle mass. You can typically meet your protein needs by including a good source of protein with each meal and with snacks.

- Nuts and seeds
- Ensure[®], BOOST[®], protein powder
- Eggs
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Beans and legumes
- Cheese, yogurt, and ice cream



Increase Calorie Intake

Calories are important for maintaining weight and for providing your body the energy it needs. Try incorporating some of these high-calorie foods into your diet:

- **Avocado:** slice and serve with eggs, toast, sandwiches, and salads
- **Granola:** sprinkle on yogurt, fruit, and ice cream; mix with dried fruit and nuts for a snack
- **Hummus:** mix with extra olive oil and use as dip with crackers, pita chips, and vegetables
- **Oils and butter:** add to soups, potatoes, oatmeal, and rice/noodles; spread on meats and eggs
- **Nut butters:** spread on sandwiches and crackers; use as dip for celery and blend with milkshakes
- **Food preparation:** bread meat and vegetables, sauté and fry foods when possible, and add sauces or gravies
- **Cheese:** melt on top of casseroles, potatoes, and vegetables; add to omelets and sandwiches
- **Cream cheese:** spread on breads, muffins, fruit, and crackers; use as vegetable dip
- **Milk and cream:** add to soups, eggs, pudding, and noodles



Symptom Management

Diarrhea Management

Diarrhea is having loose or watery stools 3 or more times in one day. Uncontrolled diarrhea can lead to weakness, dehydration, poor appetite, and weight loss.



Recommendations

- Take your antidiarrheal medications as prescribed.
- Drink plenty of mild and room temperature clear liquids throughout the day to prevent dehydration. Fluids recommended include water, sugar-free Gatorade[®], Pedialyte[®], and unsweet tea.
- Eat small meals and snacks instead of 3 large meals per day.
- If you require supplemental nutrition, please follow your dietitian's guidelines.



Diarrhea Regimen

- Take 2 Imodium[®] capsules (or liquid-version equivalent) after your first loose stool. Take one Imodium[®] capsule (or the liquid-version equivalent) after every subsequent stool.

Recommended Foods for Diarrhea and Nausea

- High-sodium foods, such as broths, soups, sports drinks, crackers, and pretzels
- High-potassium foods, such as fruit juices, nectars, potatoes without skin, and bananas
- Foods high in pectin, such as applesauce and bananas
- Low-fiber foods, such as white bread, white rice, potatoes without skin, eggs, Jell-O[®], baked chicken, or fish
- Drink at least one cup of hydrating fluid after each loose stool



Foods to Avoid for Diarrhea and Nausea

- Fatty, greasy, fried, spicy, or very sweet foods and raw vegetables
- Drinks and foods that may cause gas, such as carbonated drinks, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, beans, peas, raw apples
- Sugar-free gums or candies made with sorbitol, xylitol, or mannitol
- High-fiber foods, such as whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta, brown rice, granola, raw fruits and vegetables, popcorn, nuts/seeds, and beans/legumes
- Alcoholic and caffeinated beverages



Managing Taste Changes

Your taste can change from day to day. Try experimenting with new foods, marinades, spices, and seasonings.

- Avoid tobacco products
- Increase fluid intake
- Balance flavors with fats (olive oil and canola oil), acids (citrus fruits and vinegar), salt, and sweeteners (maple syrup and honey)

If you have any nutrition questions or concerns, please contact dietitian, **Anna Sewell, M.A., R.D., L.D.**, at 214-645-5271 or anna.sewell@utsouthwestern.edu.