

Nutrition for Head and Neck Cancer

What to Eat:

- It is important to get enough nutrition to support weight maintenance in order to avoid unintended treatment delays, to better withstand treatment, and to support overall recovery.
- While following a well-balanced diet has a positive impact on your health, it can sometimes become difficult as you begin to experience various side effects that affect eating.
- We encourage you to eat whatever foods sound good to you, whatever foods you can tolerate, and whatever foods you have available to you. We **DO NOT** recommend cutting out any foods/food groups or following any restrictive diet plans or eating patterns (i.e. Keto, low sugar, vegan, etc.)
- Please take into consideration that your ability to eat may temporarily worsen and your diet may change to soft foods, liquids, or a feeding tube if you are unable to meet nutrition and hydration needs by oral intake alone.

Hydration

It is recommended to have at least 8 cups of hydrating fluids per day. Hydrating fluids include, but are not limited to:

- Water
- Tea
- Pedialyte®
- Sugar-free sports drinks
- Flavored and carbonated water
- Caffeinated drinks (in moderation)



Supplements

BOOST® and Ensure® offer drinkable supplements that can increase protein intake and help maintain weight and blood sugar levels. These products are designed to complement your diet and can be found in many grocery stores, pharmacies, and online. Discuss with your dietitian which supplement would be best for you.

Weight Maintenance

To increase calories:

- Keep high calorie foods readily available at home and when you are on the go.
- Eat small frequent meals and snacks every 2-3 hours during the day.
- Minimize fluids at mealtime.
- Sip on higher calorie fluids, such as milk, juice, milkshakes, and nutrition supplements throughout the day.
- Eat your biggest meals when you are feeling your best.



Increasing Protein

Including a good source of protein into each meal and snack can typically help you reach your protein goals. Good protein sources include:

- Hard or semi-soft cheese
- Milk and milk products, such as ice cream and yogurt
- Eggs
- Nuts, seeds, and wheat germ
- Nut butter
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Beans and legumes
- Meal replacement drinks, supplements, and protein powder



If you have any nutrition-related questions or concerns, please contact dietitian, **Laura Urias, M.C.N., R.D., L.D.**, at 214-645-5270 or laura.urias@utsouthwestern.edu.