

## Healthy lifestyle habits for a better quality of life

**Developing healthy lifestyle habits is important for everyone. During cancer treatment, healthy lifestyle habits can make treatment more tolerable, help you to manage side effects, and decrease the risk of complications such as malnutrition and infection. After treatment, healthy lifestyle habits can help you recover faster and decrease the risk of disease such as other cancers, heart disease, and diabetes.**

### NUTRITION

Nutrient-rich foods give your body the fuel it needs for healthy function and disease prevention. Good nutrition also supports a healthy weight and body size.

The American Heart Association recommends a plant-based, heart-healthy menu that includes

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Proteins such as lean meats (chicken, turkey), fish, eggs, low-fat dairy, beans, nuts and soy
- Healthy fats such as olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds.

Limit your consumption of saturated fat, *trans* fatty acids, sodium, red meat, processed meats with nitrates or nitrites, and sweets with added sugars, including sugary beverages.

Practice portion control to avoid overeating by checking the serving size on food labels. You may find it helpful to eat several smaller meals throughout the day instead of eating three large meals.

The American Institute for Cancer Research recommends that two thirds of the food on your plate should be vegetables, fruits, whole grains or beans.

### WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Achieve and maintain the healthy weight and body size that is right for you. Two tools your healthcare team may use to help determine a healthy weight for you are

- Body mass index (BMI), which is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters to provide an estimate of body fat. BMI assigns weight to one of four categories: underweight, normal/healthy weight, overweight or obese.

- Waist circumference, which can indicate an increased risk for disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. A high-risk waist circumference is

- More than 40 inches for men
- More than 35 inches for women.

If you are concerned about your weight, talk to your healthcare team and ask for advice.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Benefits of physical activity include

- Weight management
- Increased energy
- Improved mobility
- Better mood
- Decreased risk of disease.

The American Institute for Cancer Research recommends that you get at least 150 minutes (about 20 minutes a day) of moderate activity (such as walking, swimming, stretching, yoga, etc) or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity (such as jogging, swimming, dancing, biking, etc.) per week. Include strength training and stretching, along with aerobic exercise, to build muscle and increase flexibility.

You should also avoid extended periods of inactivity (eg, watching TV or sitting at a desk). Break up the time by getting up and walking around or stretching for at least a few minutes every hour.

Talk to your healthcare team before starting an exercise program. You may need to start slowly with short periods of exercise every day and then gradually increase the time until you are exercising for 150 minutes per week. If mobility is an issue, you may benefit from seeing a physical therapist.

## AVOID TOBACCO

Smoking increases the risk for a number of cancers and other diseases such as heart disease. Smokeless tobacco such as chewing tobacco or snuff also increases the risk of oral cancer and disease. E-cigarettes do not contain tobacco but do contain chemicals and substances that may cause organ damage, diseases and possibly cancer. The long-term risks are not yet known. If you do use tobacco, talk to your healthcare team for help to quit. Visit [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) for resources to help you stop smoking or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to connect with the smoking cessation helpline in your state.

## LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE

Heavy drinking and/or binge drinking increases your risk for liver disease, pancreatitis, certain cancers and alcohol abuse disorders. If you do choose to drink, the *2015-2020 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends limiting consumption to no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. 'One drink' is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of liquor.

## USE SUN PROTECTION

Sun damage increases the risk of skin cancers and contributes to signs of aging. Follow these guidelines from the American Academy of Dermatology:

- Avoid direct sun when possible.
- Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA and UVB) with SPF 30 or higher and reapply every 2 hours.
- Wear a hat, protective clothing, and sunglasses to further protect skin.
- Do not use tanning beds.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Your mental health is important. Depression, anxiety and stress can take a toll on your physical health. Try to reduce stress by doing things you enjoy such as spending time with family, being outdoors, journaling, reading, meditating or any activity you prefer. If you are anxious or depressed and feel as though you can no longer manage your daily activities, talk to your healthcare team. You may benefit from professional counseling and/or medication.

## DISEASE SCREENINGS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Go to all follow-up appointments, even if you are feeling fine. Visit your primary care provider for annual checkups, too. Follow all recommended cancer and disease screenings. Many diseases can be treated or managed more effectively if caught early. Stay up-to-date on immunizations such as yearly flu shots. (Immunosuppressed patients and people living in a household with an immunosuppressed person should not receive the nasal spray version of the flu vaccine as it contains live viruses.) Patients who have had a transplant lose the protection from vaccines that they had received as children. All transplant patients need to get those childhood vaccines again once their immune systems have recovered.

## Questions For Your Doctor

- What can I do to lower my risk of disease?
- What is a healthy weight for me?
- What immunizations do I need?
- Can you refer me to a registered dietitian to discuss nutrition?
- What type of exercise regimen do you recommend? Can you refer me to a physical therapist?
- How can I get help to stop smoking?
- Should I limit my alcohol intake?

## GET SUPPORT. REACH OUT TO OUR INFORMATION SPECIALISTS

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society team consists of master's level oncology social workers, nurses and health educators who are available by phone Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (ET).

Contact us at **800.955.4572** or  
[www.LLS.org/InformationSpecialists](http://www.LLS.org/InformationSpecialists).