

## Diet and nutrition

Making sure that you get enough nutrition during your head and neck cancer is very important. In addition to adequacy of your intake, the composition of your diet (ratio of macronutrients and micronutrients) is required to ensure that you have enough strength and energy, maintain a healthy body weight, and recover quickly from your treatment with minimal treatment-related side effects. Getting a nutritionist to help plan your diet is important before any major treatment is desirable. Some important things to keep in mind are:

- **Targets:** It's important to have a daily target of calories, grams of protein and ml of water – even if you cannot achieve it every day, you will be able to identify the trends which can help optimize your intake.
- **Tracking your weight:** You should check your weight at least once a week. Weight loss can predict a higher risk of complications from your treatment and requires more intensive feeding regimens.
- **Food and drink logs:** It is important to maintain a log of food and drink when you are having difficulty eating, have reduced appetite or weight loss. Apps like MyFitnessPal can help you accurately track your intake while calculating calories, grams of protein and water intake, and are very helpful.

## Side effects associated radiotherapy/chemotherapy and measures to overcome them

Week of treatment	Common complaints	Measures that may mitigate their severity
Week 1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss or alteration in taste</li> <li>• Sores appearing in the mouth or throat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding spices or herbs to food (as long as you don't have sores)</li> <li>• If you have a metallic taste in your mouth, avoid metal cutlery and drinking from cans</li> <li>• Restrict yourself to soft, bland food</li> <li>• Avoid hot and spicy food or drink</li> <li>• Acidic fruits (oranges, lemons and grapefruits are best avoided)</li> <li>• Don't eat foods that are hard or have rough textures (chikki, toast, crackers)</li> <li>• Rinse your mouth every 4-6 hours with either:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Tiredness and lack of energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A mixture of 4 cups of water with a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of baking soda</li> <li>○ Mouthwash with no alcohol or sugar</li> <li>• Rinse for around 30 seconds then spit out</li> <li>• Plan for multiple small meals in stead of large ones</li> <li>• Eat calorie-dense or 'rich' foods (explained later)</li> </ul>
<p>From week 4 to 2 weeks after treatment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to weeks 1 to 3</li> <li>• Nausea and vomiting</li> <li>• Drying up of mouth and reduced secretions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid oily or high-fat foods like pastries, fried food</li> <li>• Avoid lying down for at least an hour after you eat</li> <li>• Bland, starchy foods (congee, rice, toast, crackers) or salty foods can help with nausea</li> <li>• Room temperature food may bother you less since the aroma is reduced</li> <li>• Ginger (in lozenges, candies, tea) can help reduce nausea</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft, moist foods (watermelon, mango, curd)</li> <li>• Sucking on ice cubes can help</li> <li>• Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks</li> <li>• Always carry a bottle of water and keep taking sips throughout the day</li> <li>• Sugar free mints or gum can stimulate saliva production</li> </ul>
1 month after completion of treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult or painful swallowing</li> <li>• Loss of taste</li> <li>• Dry mouth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit a swallowing therapist for a specific treatment plan</li> </ul>

#### Examples of high-calorie high-protein foods to incorporate in your diet

Food	Serving	Calories	Protein (g)
Whole milk	250 ml	150	8
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons	200	8
Full-fat ice cream	½ cup	260	4
Coconut or olive oil	1 teaspoon	100	0
Honey	1 tablespoon	65	0
Egg	1 large	68	7
Paneer	100 g	300	20
Chickpeas	1 cup	300	16
Oats (cooked with whole milk)	1 cup	250	12
Peanuts	100 g	567	26
Ensure High Protein shake	240 ml	210	25
Ghee	1 tablespoon	130	0

#### Examples of soft and bland foods to incorporate in your diet

Food group	Recommended foods
Milk and dairy	Whole milk
	Paneer
	Yoghurt
Vegetables	Fresh vegetable juices (carrot)
	Well cooked and chopped vegetables (carrot, beans, beetroot, pumpkin, peas)

	Spinach
<b>Fruits</b>	Ripe banana
	Fruit juice (apple and pear)
	Any cooked fruit without skin
<b>Starchy foods</b>	Cooked cereals (rice, puffed rice, quinoa, foxtail millet)
	Cooked and soft potato
	Soft bread
<b>Fats and oils</b>	Butter
	Oil
	Ghee
	Avocado
<b>Meat and meat substitutes</b>	Tender, cooked meat, fish and poultry
	Scrambled eggs
	Tofu
	Hummus
<b>Sweets and desserts</b>	Plain custards or pudding
	Seedless jelly
	Sherbet, ice cream, milkshakes