

LOW APPETITE and WEIGHT LOSS



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You or your loved one has been diagnosed with a type of blood cancer. You may experience side effects from the type of therapy you receive. Low appetite and weight loss are common side effects. How can you manage them?

This fact sheet will help you:

- Get an overview of low appetite, weight loss, and malnutrition
- Understand the causes
- Learn how to manage these side effects and optimize your health and well-being
- Get a list of questions to ask your healthcare team

Managing side effects is an important part of cancer treatment. Be sure to talk to your healthcare team about any side effects you may have. They can help you manage these as you go through treatment.



Low appetite and weight loss

Loss of appetite is a common side effect of cancer and your treatment. This means you may not feel hungry, not want to eat, or have no taste for food. It can lead to weight loss that could negatively impact your health and quality of life.

It's important to eat well during your cancer treatment so you don't experience malnutrition.

About malnutrition

- It can happen from loss of appetite and unhealthy weight loss
- It takes place when you don't eat or absorb enough calories or nutrients for your body to function well
- It can increase your risk of health complications, hospitalization, infections, loss of muscle strength, and overall lower quality of life
- It may delay, change, or stop your cancer treatment

During treatment, try to avoid losing weight and dieting, unless your healthcare team advises it.

Good nutrition is an important part of cancer treatment: it can help you manage side effects.

Losing weight and your appetite: Causes

There are many reasons why you may lose your appetite or lose weight:

- Your cancer
- Your treatment
- Your medications
- Other side effects, such as pain, fatigue, nausea, mouth sores, changes in taste, constipation, or diarrhea
- An enlarged spleen or liver that pushes on your stomach and creates a feeling of fullness
- Emotions such as stress, anxiety, or depression

Keep track of your weight and talk to your healthcare team if you lose weight or have side effects that make it difficult for you to eat.

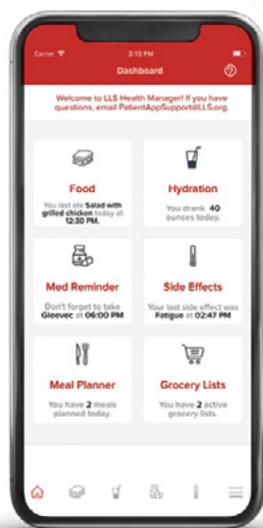
Ask for a referral to a **registered dietitian** for advice.

Managing side effects

Learning about side effects helps you know what to expect and how to manage them better.

Tips to boost your appetite

- Be as active as your body can manage
- Choose foods that you really like
- Eat with family and friends and talk about things you enjoy
- Talk to your healthcare team to see if any medication can increase your appetite or if something else is interfering like stress, anxiety, or depression
- Watch a cooking show or look at pictures of food to stimulate your appetite



Track your side effects with the LLS Health Manager App

bloodcancers.ca/health-manager-app

Managing your side effects is an important part of cancer care. Tracking your medication, side effects, and food and nutrition intake allows you to share the information easily with your doctor to identify patterns and strategies.

Tips to boost your nutrition

With malnutrition, it's more important to eat enough calories than to focus only on eating healthy foods.

- Eat 5 or 6 small meals per day: think about when you are most hungry and eat your largest meal then
- Choose foods that are high in protein like beans, chicken, fish, meat, yogurt, tofu, and eggs, and eat them first
- Pick foods that are high in calories: stay away from low-fat or diet versions
- Snack often: keep snacks nearby and have one before bed
- Set reminders on your phone to eat
- Try a nutritious drink, like a high protein shake, smoothie, or a liquid nutrition supplement recommended by your healthcare team
- Avoid drinking liquids 30 minutes before you eat so you have room for solid food
- Buy precooked meals, use an online meal delivery service, or ask friends and family to get groceries and prepare your meals

You may need nutrition therapy if you can't eat enough food or drink enough fluids on your own. Your healthcare team will guide you through this process.





Foods that can boost your nutrition

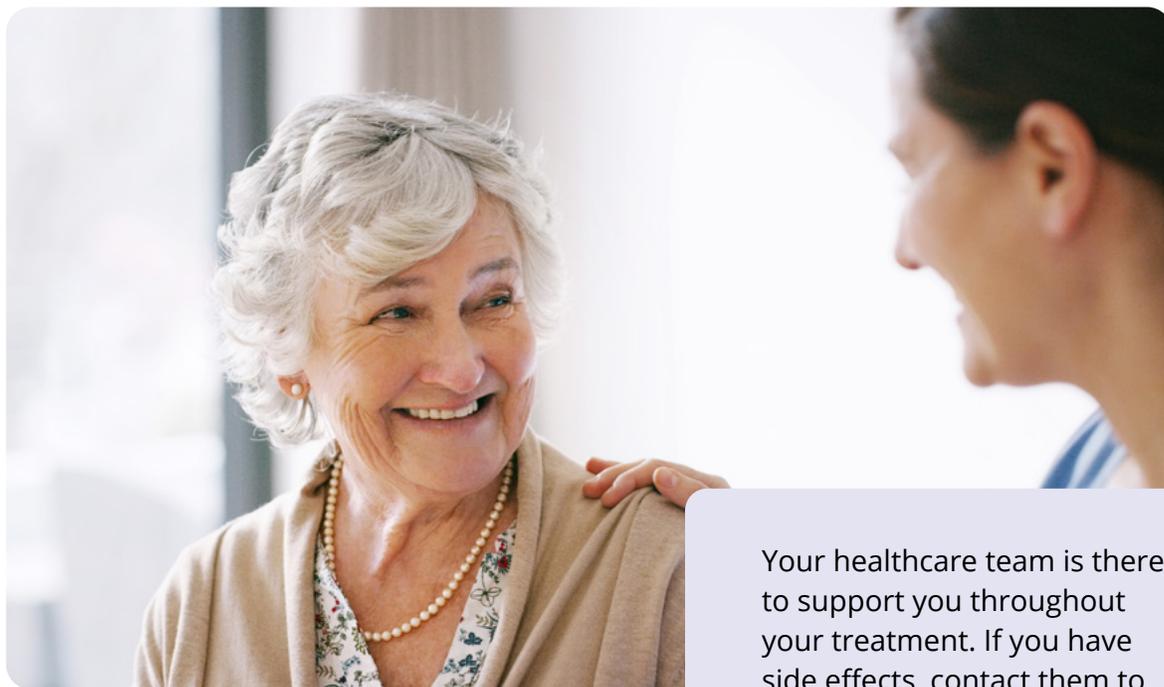
Certain foods can increase your calorie and protein intake. Here are a few examples and suggestions. Be sure to consider food allergies or sensitivities and nutrition guidelines from your healthcare team.

Foods that can increase your calorie and protein intake	How to add these foods to your meals
Butter, margarine, and oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use butter or margarine to prepare vegetables and warm cereals• Cook with oil (avocado or olive oil are both good choices)
Dried or evaporated milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add powdered milk or evaporated milk to creamy soups
Nuts, seeds, dried fruit, granola, and wheat germ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add dried fruit, nuts, and seeds to salads, cereals, or baked goods• Sprinkle granola on cereal or yogurt• Add wheat germ to muffin or bread recipes
Mayonnaise, creamy salad dressings, and sour cream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mix sour cream with mashed potatoes• Spread mayonnaise on sandwiches• Dip raw vegetables in a dip or salad dressing
Yogurt, ice cream, whole milk, and heavy cream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add whipped cream to desserts• Drink whole milk on its own or in a smoothie• Eat yogurt and ice cream for dessert or a snack
Nut butters (like peanut or almond) and protein powder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add nut butter or protein powder to shakes and smoothies
Eggs, egg substitutes, and cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add cheese to soups, casseroles, cooked vegetables, and sandwiches• Eat eggs or egg substitutes on their own or in a frittata or omelette
Avocados	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add avocado to toast, soup, smoothies, sandwiches, and salads



Questions to ask your healthcare team

- What are the potential side effects of my treatment?
- What can I do to manage these side effects?
- Can you refer me to a registered dietitian?
- Can you refer me to supportive care for help managing side effects?
- Can you give me nutrition guidelines to follow?
- Can you recommend a liquid nutrition supplement?
- What signs or symptoms require a visit to a healthcare professional or a trip to Emergency?



Your healthcare team is there to support you throughout your treatment. If you have side effects, contact them to discuss how to manage your symptoms quickly.

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