

Information Sheet:

Breast Cancer Treatment & Weight Gain

Unwanted weight gain may occur with some cancer treatments and may affect your overall health and the way you feel.

Approximately 50% of women receiving treatment for breast cancer do gain weight. Weight gain may be caused by a range of reasons including:

- ❖ Not being as active as usual
- ❖ Oedema (or swelling due to fluid retention) - this is a side effect from some chemotherapy drugs.
- ❖ The chemotherapy drugs and the anti-nausea medication can increase your appetite, so you will eat more.
- ❖ Early menopause caused by your cancer treatment for some women - this changes the rate that energy is used, which in turn may increase your weight.

How can I manage my weight gain during treatment?

If gaining weight becomes a problem for you, please discuss it with your doctor or nurse before you change your eating habits. The reason for you gaining weight needs to be established and then the best way to manage it can be discussed. Speaking with a dietician may help you to plan meals.

Some ways to manage your diet if you are concerned about gaining weight may include the following:

- ❖ Continuing to drink plenty of fluids, about 8 glasses (or 2 litres) of water a day.
- ❖ Maintaining healthy eating habits is important. Eating more fruits, vegetables, cereals and other high fibre foods is a great way to maintain your weight. You may find it useful to choose fruit as a snack and to choose high fibre breads and cereals (preferably wholegrain).
- ❖ Eat less fat, sugar and refined flour and drink less alcohol. Choosing low fat dairy products is also beneficial. Trimming the fat off meat before cooking and choosing lean meats may also help. Limit cakes, biscuits and puddings to special occasions and try to avoid fried take away foods as much as you can. Reduce portion sizes

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- ❖ If you choose to drink alcohol, have no more than one standard drink per day and have at least two alcohol free days per week
- ❖ Take note of what you are eating, looking at where you might be over eating.
- ❖ Exercise regularly. A walk after lunch may help to keep your bones strong, reduce the feeling of fatigue and keep your blood pumping well, as well as maintaining your weight.

Tell your Doctor or Nurse if:

You have signs of fluid retention. This may include swelling around your ankles and wrists, anything that feels tighter than usual, such as your watchband, ring or bracelet, or if your skin feels stiff (indentations may be left on your skin after you have pressed on any swollen area).

We encourage you to speak with your healthcare team if you have any concerns about your weight gain during your treatment.

We welcome feedback at:

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Bairnsdale Regional Health Service is located on the traditional land of the Gunai Kurnai people.