

# Information Sheet: Cancer Treatment & Weight Loss

Many people with cancer find there are times when they cannot eat as much as they usually do and sometimes they lose weight.

Weight loss is associated with extreme tiredness (fatigue), weakness, loss of energy, and an inability to perform everyday tasks.

Weight loss can occur because of the cancer or due to side-effects such as nausea, vomiting, constipation, sore mouth, loss of taste and poor appetite.

There are many ways you can try to maintain your weight.

## How can I manage my weight loss during my treatment?

- ❖ Eat nourishing snacks between meals. Try milk shakes; cheese and biscuits; toast with vegemite, peanut butter, pate, jam or honey; yoghurt and ice cream.
- ❖ Large amounts of coffee and tea can fill you up, but have little nutritional value. They can make you go to the toilet a lot, causing you to become dehydrated. So it is important to drink fluids such as water and juices as well as tea and coffee.
- ❖ If you don't feel like eating solid foods, try to drink nourishing beverages during the day. Milk, milk drinks, juice and soup can provide valuable energy and nutrients.
- ❖ Try nutritional supplements. Ask the dietician for samples so you can work out which one you prefer before buying.
- ❖ Add extras to your basic food at mealtimes. While you are underweight or struggling to maintain your weight, eating extra amounts of fats and sugars, such as honey, sugar, jam, oil, margarine, butter, cream or cheese to meals is not harmful. It is only unhealthy if you eat more of such nutrients than your body requires.
- ❖ Some people tire of drinks that cause a milky mouth feel. Try adding some fruit nectar, fruit juice or soft drink to milk or fortified milk. Your dietician can also suggest fruit-juice supplement alternatives.

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- ❖ Moderate exercise, such as regular walks can help you put weight back on your muscles rather than it going into fat stores.
- ❖ Take anti-nausea medication as recommended.
- ❖ You may like to ask a dietician for advice.

## Tell your Doctor or Nurse if:

- You continue to lose weight in spite of these measures or
- You experience nausea or vomiting that is not controlled by medication

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

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We welcome feedback at:

**Bairnsdale Regional Health Service** PO Box 474 Bairnsdale VIC 3875  
P (03) 5150 3333 F (03) 5152 6784 E [email@brhs.com.au](mailto:email@brhs.com.au) [www.brhs.com.au](http://www.brhs.com.au)

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