

## 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.

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* fat, sodium, red meat, processed meats with nitrates or nitrites, and products with added sugars, including sugar-sweetened 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 (AICR) recommends that two thirds of the food on your plate should be plant foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains or beans.

**Visit [www.LLS.org/booklets](http://www.LLS.org/booklets) to view *Nutrition Handbook: Feeding your family from meal planning to mealtime.***

### 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. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a high-risk waist circumference is:
  - More than 40 inches for males
  - More than 35 inches for females

If you are concerned about your weight, talk to your healthcare team and ask for a referral to a registered dietitian who can help create a personalized plan so you can reach and maintain your goal weight in a safe and healthy way.

### 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 be physically active for at least 150 minutes a week. You can break this down to 30 minutes of exercise 5 days a week. Physical activity can include walking, swimming, yoga, dancing or any other form of movement. Include strength training and stretching, along with aerobic exercise, to build muscle and increase flexibility.

You can 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 activity every day and then gradually increase the time until you are active 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 (vape pen) 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. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025* recommends choosing not to drink or if you choose to drink, limiting consumption to no more than one drink per day for females and two drinks per day for males. "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.

Visit [www.LLS.org/booklets](http://www.LLS.org/booklets) to download *Managing Stress: How stress affects you and how to cope*.

## 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 COVID-19 boosters and 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 may lose the protection from vaccines they received as children. Many 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 physical activity 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 ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's **Information Specialists**, highly trained oncology social workers and health educators, can provide information and support and connect you to our **Clinical Trial Support Center** and **Registered Dietitians**.

- Call **800.955.4572** Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (ET)
- Visit [www.LLS.org/PatientSupport](http://www.LLS.org/PatientSupport)

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