

NOURISHING VEGETARIAN DIET

Sometimes the side effects of treatment or the effects of the cancer itself can make it difficult to eat all that your body needs. For vegetarians this information aims to help you understand the importance of eating a well-balanced diet during cancer treatment.

Why is it important to achieve a nourishing diet?

Our body needs a variety of nutrients to:

- Maintain weight
- Tolerate treatment better
- Recover from treatment faster
- Avoid infection.

How to make your diet nourishing

Protein is the building block of muscles and is needed for healing and repair of your body. It is especially important after surgery and during cancer treatment.

Include the following foods, wherever possible, to help increase protein in your diet:

- Eggs
- Full cream dairy or soy alternatives (milk, cheese, yoghurt, custard, ice cream)
Note; Nut, oat and rice milks are generally lower in protein.
- Nuts and nut butter (e.g. peanut, almond, cashew)
- Beans/pulses such as lentils, red kidney beans, chickpeas, baked beans
- Tofu and other soybean products

Energy is the fuel your body needs to function and undertake daily activities. Add the following to your food, wherever possible, to help increase the energy content of your diet:

- Olive oil, butter, avocado
- Cream and creamy sauces
- Coconut milk/cream
- Honey and jam.



Supplements

Your dietitian may recommend you consume a nutritional supplement if you have lost weight or your intake remains poor.

Commonly recommended supplements which are vegetarian include:

- Sustagen™
- Ensure™
- Resource fruit Beverage™
- Advital™.

For vegans, speak to your dietitian about additional recipes/supplements.

High protein smoothie recipe

- 1 cup (250ml) milk
- 3 scoops of Sustagen™
- Fruit of choice (eg. banana, mango, strawberries)
- Optional extras: malt, milo, toppings

Are you missing out on any key nutrients by following a vegetarian or vegan diet?

As vegetarian/vegan diets do not include meat and/or eggs and dairy, your GP can help you monitor the following:

- Your weight
- Protein
- Vitamin B12
- Iron
- Calcium
- Zinc.

One or more of these deficiencies may lead to weight and muscle loss, anaemia and/or fatigue.

Some handy tips to try

- If you've lost your appetite, try to have 6 smaller meals across the day rather than 3 larger ones.
- Try not to skip/miss meals, as not eating can make you feel worse.
- If your appetite is better in the morning, plan bigger meals then and smaller snacks for later in the day.
- Plan ahead and take snacks with you to have while waiting for appointments.
- Eat by the clock (e.g. every 1-2hours) even if you don't feel hungry.
- If preparing meals becomes difficult, keep a supply of ready to eat foods handy (e.g. buy single serve items in the dairy, frozen foods, soup and canned food sections of the supermarket).
- Choose foods with attractive colours and use garnishes to make them more appealing.
- If you feel full quickly, avoid drinking large amounts of liquid 1 hour before and up to 30 minutes after meals.
- Having family and friends around at meal times makes it more enjoyable.
- Exercise may help to stimulate your appetite. Try some light exercise such as walking for 10 minutes before meal times.

Make the most of every mouthful

Here we provide some suggestions on how to increase the nourishment of your food.

Food group	Food/snack	Add extra nourishment by
Meat alternatives	Eggs (poached, scrambled, fried, omelette)	Add extra virgin olive oil/butter/margarine, avocado, grated cheese or cream
	Beans and pulses: baked beans, lentils, chickpeas, red kidney beans, split peas	Add to casseroles and soups Add to salads Add extra virgin olive oil/butter/margarine, avocado, grated cheese or cream Mix tahini or nut spreads into vegetarian/vegan burgers
	Nuts, seeds, 'nut meat', nut butters/spreads	Add to casseroles Spread on crackers/biscuits
	Tofu, vegan burger patties, Quorn™ mince	Add extra virgin olive oil or beans and pulses
Dairy foods or alternatives	Milk, soy milk, milkshakes, iced coffee and smoothies	Use fortified milk Add nuts, flax/chia seeds, avocado, peanut butter, yoghurt, ice cream Sustagen™/Ensure™/Advital™/whey or vegan protein powder
	Cheese and biscuits/crackers	Add avocado, cream cheese or butter/margarine
	Dips and crackers/chips Yoghurt, custard, ice cream, dairy desserts (eg. mousse or Fruche™)	Choose hommus or cream cheese based dips Add cream, honey or fruit
Breads, grains and cereals	Breakfast cereals	Use fortified milk Add nuts, seeds, honey, yoghurt, fruit, Sustagen™/Ensure™/Advital™
	Bread, toast or muffins	Add a boiled egg, avocado, crema cheese, butter/margarine, honey, nut butter, Nutella™ or jam
	Pasta and rice	Add extra virgin olive oil, creamy sauces or cheese
Fruit and vegetables	Vegetables	Add extra virgin olive oil, butter/margarine, cheese or creamy sauces
	Salad	Add extra virgin olive oil, avocado, cottage/ricotta cheese or mayonnaise
	Fruit (fresh, stewed, tinned)	Add yoghurt, custard, honey, or ice cream

Remember: it is important to eat a variety of foods each day. A selection of foods from each food group will ensure variety and the nutritional balance necessary for good health.

Sample menu ideas	
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast cereal with fortified milk and added yoghurt/fruit • Poached/boiled/fried/scrambled eggs with cheese/milk/fortified milk • Toast with baked beans, avocado, peanut butter etc.
Morning Tea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk drink (e.g. Sustagen™/Ensure™/iced coffee/fruit smoothie/Up and Go™) • Fruit with yoghurt/custard
Lunch	<p>Meal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled tofu with satay/coconut sauce with rice or softly cooked vegetables mashed with milk/margarine/cream/cheese • Lentil soup with sour cream served with a bread roll
Afternoon Tea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy dessert (yoghurt/Fruche™/rice pudding) or soy/coconut dessert • Crackers with cheese/hommus/dips
Dinner	<p>Meal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaghetti bolognese (Quorn™) with added grated cheese and bread with extra virgin olive oil/butter/margarine • Homemade burger using a vegie patty, cheese, avocado/mayonnaise <p>Dessert: Custard/ice cream/chocolate mousse/crème caramel</p>
Supper	Sweet biscuits and milks drinks such as Milo™ (made with fortified milk)

Additional recommendations discussed with your dietitian:



How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Nutrition Department on **(03) 8559 5220** from:

- Monday to Friday
- 8:30am to 4:30pm

In the event of an emergency, please dial **000** for an ambulance or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.