

Living with Cancer

Many factors contribute to cancer which is a complex disease often caused by the interaction of our genes with various environmental triggers. Many factors also need to come together to recover good health. Of great importance is a diet that supports your needs. Generally this should be high in seasonal green leaves, vegetables, fruits, grains and pulses whilst eliminating ultra processed foods. The food you eat should come from a growing system which avoids the use of chemicals and nurtures the soil. Organic and bio-dynamic systems are chemical free and generally produce food with the highest concentration of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients.

Produce from organic and biodynamic farming systems is usually more expensive and many people can simply not afford it, so look for the best alternatives. Learn which fruit and vegetables are the least contaminated with pesticides. Everyday foods like cabbage, onions, frozen peas and mushrooms are less likely to be grown with chemicals. Others are particularly bad. PAN the UK pesticide action network have produced a dirty dozen list of those containing the greatest cocktail of pesticides:

<https://www.pan-uk.org/dirty-dozen/>

There are a number possible solutions regarding affordability.

If you have enough time & energy you can consider growing your own, or join a CSA or a community garden. Failing this you could order a weekly seasonal fruit and vegetable box and have seasonal organic produce delivered to your door.

Living with cancer and particularly for those undergoing treatment, can adversely affect appetite and the ability to eat well. If you are experiencing any difficulties around food, seek out help from a health professional or get in touch with a cancer charity like Maggie's who offer free cancer support:

<https://www.maggies.org>

Ideas to enliven a jaded appetite

On waking drink the juice of 1/2 lemon in 1 pint of warm water. This helps balance the body.

Try to eat small amounts and often, maybe every 2 – 3 hours.

Keep the fridge and cupboard stocked with simple easy to prepare food you enjoy.

Cook extra and freeze for days you feel less like being in the kitchen.

Join a box scheme and order a weekly fruit and vegetable box. Even when you are not hungry you can make vegetable juices.

Can't face shopping - all major supermarkets deliver.

If your loosing weight eat nutritious snacks high in calories and protein. Try full fat yogurt with hemp seeds and seasonal fruit. Hummus, eggs, avocado, nuts and seeds

Drink water between meals to keep hydrated.

If you are able, go for a walk to stimulate the appetite.

If possible share meals with family and friends.

Create yourself a space that is a delight to eat in, a candle and a few flowers make all the difference.

If the smell or taste of food makes you nauseous, try to enlist someone to prepare your meals. People like to help so don't turn down an offer.

Foods to avoid

Ultra processed foods

Ultra processed foods, including soft drinks, mass-produced packaged breads, breakfast cereals, cakes, many desserts & snacks generally contain high amounts of simple sugars which cause insulin levels to spike. The more simple sugars we eat the more excessive the amounts of insulin produced. When our bodies produce too much insulin, cancer cells can be encouraged to grow. Ultra-processed foods are associated with a greater risk of developing cancer and an increased risk of dying from cancer.^① A high sugar intake also depletes the body of key minerals and vitamins.

It is important to avoid processed foods containing altered fats as these are detrimental to health. Always check labels and avoid foods containing refined oils.

Two essential poly unsaturated fats are omega 3 - *alpha linolenic acid* found in hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, linseed & walnuts and omega 6 - *linoleic acid* found in hemp seeds, sunflower seeds & sesame. Oils made from these seeds are not suitable to cook with as heat will alter & damage them. Eating the whole food will provide the most nutritional benefits.

Foods to include in a healing food diet

Green leaves

Fresh, raw plant foods and especially green leaves are vibrant with high electron energy which provides oxygen to our cells. Low oxygen levels in cells are a contributing factor in cancer development. ^②

Green juices are particularly good to add to your diet. All dark greens, wild and cultivated are good. Two of the best are kale and nettles.

Kale has the highest amount of good-for-you nutrients among green leafy vegetables per calorie of energy. In addition to the wide array of vitamins and minerals researchers have found anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer compounds in kale.

Nettles have immune-boosting, anti-inflammatory and antifungal properties. Rich in minerals nettles have been shown to increase both red and white blood cell counts, which helps build healthy blood and supports the immune system.

Vegetables

Plan to include as many vegetable varieties, according to season, as possible. In brightly coloured vegetables there are an abundance of plant chemicals, known as phytonutrients, with antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and immune supportive properties. Choose from asparagus, celery, cauliflower, cucumber, fennel, green and red cabbage, colourful peppers, courgettes, tomatoes, kohlrabi, lettuce, leeks, turnips, carrots & beetroot.

Lacto fermented foods

The gut microbiota are critical to the immune system, lacto fermented foods replenish the gut with beneficial bacteria. Kefir, tempeh, kombucha, miso, kimchi, sauerkraut and cultured cheeses are all good choices though some people may decide to avoid dairy.

Linseed

Good source of plant lignans and other phytonutrients that are linked to better survival of breast cancer. Excellent source of the anti-inflammatory omega 3 fatty acid alpha linolenic acid.

Hemp seed

A complete easy to digest protein, contains many minerals and vitamins and provides essential fatty acids omega 6 and omega 3 in the right balance for human nutrition.

Protein

Legumes such as beans, lentils, peas and chickpeas provide you with good quality protein in addition they provide food for beneficial gut bacteria.

Whole grains

Excellent source of B vitamins which are helpful in reducing fatigue and lifting spirits. In addition whole grains provide minerals like iron, magnesium and selenium.

Legumes and whole grains have a high fibre content which is excellent for gut health but may not be appropriate all of the time for people with cancer

RECIPES

Tomato & kale juice - summer

serves 1

5 medium tomatoes

100g kale

1/2 lemon

3 celery sticks

6 basil leaves.

Prepare the vegetables to fit the juicer. Juice and serve

Spiced kale juice - winter

serves 1

150g kale

2 apples

2cm thumb ginger

2cm thumb turmeric

1/2 lemon

twist of black pepper

teaspoon hemp oil

With the exception of the black pepper and oil, roughly chop everything and feed through your juicer. Stir in the pepper and oil and drink at once.

Summer smoothie

serves 1

1/2 cucumber diced

1/2 avocado peeled and chopped

1" piece of turmeric grated

1 dessertspoon hemp oil

twist of black pepper

1 clove garlic

2 tomatoes

juice 1/2 lemon

large handful green leaves – chard, spinach, kale.

Put everything into a blender and blitz until smooth, adding a little water if necessary. Pour into a glass and drink at once.

Winter smoothie

serves 1

handful of frozen blueberries or 6 ready to eat prunes
2 tablespoons shelled hemp seeds
big handful of spinach
teaspoon shiitake powder (optional)
2 teaspoons raw cacao powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Put everything into a blender and blitz until smooth, adding water as necessary.
Pour into a glass and drink at once.

Spring - nettle soup

serves 4

400g nettle tops
150g floury potatoes peeled if necessary & roughly chopped
3 spring onions sliced
1litre vegetable stock
salt & black pepper

Plunge the nettle tops into boiling water for 30 seconds.
Strain through a sieve over a bowl to catch the cooking water for a nourishing herbal tea.
Immediately plunge the nettles into cold water to refresh, drain and set aside.
Put the potatoes, onions and stock into a pan and gently simmer with the lid on until tender. Remove from the heat, cool slightly then blitz in a food processor, with the nettles until smooth.
Return to the pan and warm through. If it seems too thick add a little more stock.
Season as necessary with salt & black pepper.

Summer - gazpacho

serves 4

1½ slices of day old bread
275ml vegetable stock
1 teaspoon vinegar
1 crushed clove garlic
1 medium cucumber
6 ripe tomatoes blanched and skinned
1 green pepper deseeded
1 red pepper deseeded
½ large onion
2 teaspoon olive oil

Soak the bread in a little of the stock with the vinegar and garlic. dice 2" cucumber, 2 seeded tomatoes, 1/3 of each pepper and ½ the onion and set aside. Liquidise the remaining vegetables with the stock, olive oil and bread, season & chill. Divide between 4 bowls and top with the reserved diced vegetable.

Autumn - courgette soup with ginger & turmeric

serves 4

1 leek
1 tablespoon ghee
2 medium courgettes roughly chopped
1 garlic clove finely chopped
2" piece ginger grated
2" piece of turmeric grated
1 handful of flat leaf parsley, leaves and stalks separated and each roughly chopped
1 litre vegetable stock

Trim, clean and slice the leek and very gently soften in the ghee for about 7 minutes. Stir in the courgettes, garlic, ginger, turmeric and the parsley stalks roughly chopped, cook for a further 3 minutes. Tip in the stock, bring to the boil, turn down the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat, cool slightly then blitz until smooth. Stir the parsley leaves into the soup. Season as necessary with salt and pepper and serve.

Winter aniseedy cabbage soup

serves 4

350g white cabbage
2 x fennel bulbs
4 x medium carrots
2 x medium potatoes
1 teaspoon aniseed lightly ground
1 tablespoon olive oil
1.5 litres vegetable stock
1 tablespoon light miso
salt & pepper

Chop all the vegetables into bite size pieces. In a medium sized pan gently heat the olive oil. Add the vegetables and cook turning occasionally for 10 minutes. Add the aniseed and cook for a further minute. Add the stock and cook for 20 minutes. Mix the miso with a little of the soup liquid then stir into the soup. Season as necessary and serve.

Broccoli in tomato sauce with garlic and basil

serves 4

2 cloves garlic chopped
2 onions chopped
2 tablespoons of olive oil
2 1/2 lbs tomatoes chopped
1 1/2 lbs broccoli
large bunch of basil

Cook the garlic and onions in the olive oil mixed with 4 tablespoons of water until soft. Add the tomatoes and half a pint of vegetable stock and simmer gently for 45 minutes. Blitz in a food processor then mix in the torn up bunch of basil. Steam the broccoli for just 2 minutes. Do not overcook. Toss the broccoli in the tomato sauce and serve.

Chickpea, pepper & tomato salad with basil dressing

serves 4

1 red & 1 yellow pepper halved and seeds removed
5 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

small bunch basil shredded
salt and black pepper
400g tin of chickpeas (250g drained weight)
10 cherry tomatoes
4 handfuls of seasonal green leaves.

oven 220C/425F/gas 7

Rub a little oil over the peppers and place cut side down on a baking tray and roast for about 15 minutes or until the skins start to char in the preheated oven. Remove the peppers from the oven and immediately pop into a bowl, cover with a plate and leave the peppers to cool.

When cool peel off the skins & thickly slice

Mix together the olive oil, balsamic and basil. Season with salt & pepper. Drain the beans and tip into the dressing. Cut the cherry tomatoes in half and add to the chickpeas. Divide the green leaves between 4 plates and top with the peppers, chickpeas and tomatoes

Rainbow Salad

serves 2

The following is merely a suggestion of how you can make a salad with all the colours of the rainbow. Create your own version with the vegetables of your choice.

1 tomato
1 carrot
1 green courgette
1 yellow pepper
1 fennel bulb
¼ of a red cabbage
large handful of sunflower sprouts
borage flowers
mint sprigs

for the dressing

8 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoons cider vinegar
2 teaspoons honey
¼ teaspoon salt
freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon whole grain mustard

Cut all the vegetables into bite size pieces and put into a large bowl. Whisk the dressing ingredients together and gently toss the vegetables with enough dressing to generously coat. Mix in the sunflower sprouts, divide between 2 bowls and top with borage flowers and mint.

Walnut & date sweetmeats

100g walnuts chopped
75g ready to eat dates chopped
1 tbsp gr flaxseed
1 tbsp cacao
1 tbsp honey
2 tbsp hazlenut butter
50g shelled hemp seed

Blend all the ingredients except the hemp together. Roll into balls, roll in the hemp and chill in the fridge

REFERENCES

1. Ultra processed food consumption cancer risk & cancer mortality
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(23\)00017-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(23)00017-2/fulltext)
2. The impact of O2 availability on human cancer
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3140692/>

buy organic food whenever you can
eat seasonally
source your food as locally as possible
join a box scheme
grow your own (garden, allotment or
community garden)
support food & farming campaigning
organisations

Greencuisine Trust works to bring about a transformation in the way we eat. Through practical food experiences the Trust highlights the connections between our well-being, natural resources, the environment, and our planet.



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