

Nutrition Information for Mesothelioma Patients

Medically Reviewed by:



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Why is nutrition important for mesothelioma patients?

Chemotherapy and other cancer treatments can cause numerous changes in your body. Mesothelioma — and the medical methods used to treat it — may cause side effects such as digestive issues, dry mouth, fatigue, loss of appetite or taste, and nausea — all of which can hinder proper nutrition intake.

Proper nutrition during cancer treatment can help patients:

- Better tolerate the side effects of treatment
- Heal faster from aggressive treatments like surgery
- Increase physical energy and decrease fatigue
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Minimize risk of infection with immune-boosting foods
- Remain strong enough to withstand chemotherapy, radiation, and/or surgery

In this guide are **5 tips** to help you cope with treatment-related side effects and give your body the nutrients it needs to recover.

Tip #1: Stimulate Your Appetite

Loss of appetite is one of the most common side effects of mesothelioma treatment. This can make it difficult to eat as much or as regularly as you did before treatment. Subsequently, a lack of nutrients can lead to fatigue and weight loss.

A prescription for an appetite stimulant such as megestrol acetate (commonly known by the brand name Megace®) can help reverse the effects of appetite loss. You can also ask your doctor about physical therapy as an option to help you stay active and develop a bigger appetite.



Common medication prescribed:
Megestrol acetate



“Eating **spicy foods** increases the functioning of the salivary glands, which stimulates appetite. For those with sensitive stomachs who cannot tolerate intense flavors, sucking on **hard candies** can also produce this effect.”



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Tip #2: Control Your Nausea



- ✓ Drink room-temperature liquids that have nutritional value before or after meals, but not during.
- ✓ Avoid strong smells.
- ✓ Eat smaller, more frequent meals.



Common medications prescribed:
Ondansetron | Lorazepam

Making simple changes to how much and how often you eat can go a long way in combating nausea.

Avoid drinking liquids while eating, as digestion is easier when you drink either before or after meals. It is also best to avoid filling up on liquids that have no caloric or nutritional value, like tea, coffee, and soda.

When receiving chemotherapy for mesothelioma, the strong smell of warm or hot foods and beverages can further induce nausea and make you feel sicker.

Since ginger has natural anti-nausea properties, you can try sucking on ginger mints, drinking ginger tea, or eating ginger chews.

Some popular nausea medications, such as ondansetron (sold under the brand name Zofran®) and lorazepam (sold under the brand name Ativan®) have been proven to be highly effective in reducing nausea or queasiness.

Be sure to talk to your oncologist about the right nausea medication for you.

“Foods and drinks stored at **room temperature** can decrease nausea and are better tolerated by the digestive system.” —Amy Fair, RN, Patient Advocate



Tip #3: Increase Your Caloric Intake



With your oncologist's approval, you can drink high-protein and immune-supporting supplements such as Boost® and Ensure® between meals to raise your calorie count. Adding ice cream to these supplements can enhance their flavors and increase their caloric value.

You can also add:

- Avocado to buttered toast
- Nut butters or peanut butter to bread or shakes
- Powdered milk or sour cream to sauces and baked goods

If you have dietary restrictions, lactose-free dairy varieties are available.



Tip #4: Consider Your Protein Needs

“A high-protein diet has been known to be effective in helping patients recover after surgery.”

—Amy Fair, RN, Patient Advocate



Tip: Eat the highest protein-rich foods on your plate first while your appetite is strongest.

If you are having trouble eating and keeping weight on, increasing the amount of protein in your diet can help you build and maintain muscle. Protein can also facilitate cell growth and repair, boost the immune system, and help manage treatment-related side effects.

Examples of protein-rich foods include:



Beans

- Black beans
- Kidney beans
- Lentils
- Soybeans
- Split peas



Meats

- Beef
- Chicken
- Fish
- Ham
- Lamb
- Turkey



Dairy Products

- Cottage cheese
- Cheese
- Cooked Eggs
- Milk
- Yogurt



Nuts

- Almonds
- Cashews
- Pistachios
- Walnuts



Always consult with your doctor before increasing your protein intake. Mesothelioma treatment may alter your kidney function. **A high-protein diet is typically not recommended if you have kidney disease.**

Tip #5: Consult a Dietitian



Ask for a nutritionist or dietitian consultation during your next oncology appointment.

Most insurance policies that include cancer care will cover the cost of meeting with a nutritionist or dietitian. In fact, many cancer centers have nutrition programs and on-staff dietitians to help patients get proper nutrition during treatment.



Tip: If you're a candidate for surgery, scheduling a consultation with a dietitian and optimizing your nutrition before the procedure can have a positive impact on your recovery.

Medical Nutrition Therapy

Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) is covered by many insurance plans. If you don't already have access to a dietitian as part of your mesothelioma care team, you can ask for a referral from your oncologist or nurse.

During a consultation, a registered dietitian can:

- ✓ Create a nutrition plan that accommodates any allergies or dietary restrictions
- ✓ Determine whether you're getting enough protein and calories
- ✓ Help you navigate common treatment side effects such as diarrhea, constipation, and mucositis (sore/swollen mouth caused by chemotherapy)
- ✓ Identify foods you can eat to maintain a healthy weight and energy level
- ✓ Recommend vitamins or supplements to improve your immune function
- ✓ Answer any questions you have about diet and nutrition



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your questions and listen to your story. Speak with
yours today by calling:**

877-868-0370