

I CAN

NEWSLETTER

Fighting cancer through science, healthy living, and prevention

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More Than Medicine

This issue of Texas Oncology's I Can newsletter focuses on the things beyond medicine that can ease the physical and emotional burden of treatment. Cancer treatment affects the whole person, body and spirit. Keeping a positive attitude and staying strong allows the body to use all its energy for healing, and gives medical treatments an extra boost. Learn more inside...

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Fuel for the Fight: Nutrition During Cancer Treatment



Nourishing your body properly is one of the best ways to protect and promote your health. For cancer patients, the food pyramid may not be top of mind, but proper nutrition is as important as ever. Eating a balanced, wholesome diet means the body has critical fuel to heal and stay strong during treatment. Each patient, cancer type, and treatment course is unique, and the details of nutritional needs are unique, as well. A doctor can provide more guidance for a specific case, but these principles will help keep your body strong.

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“Eating nutrient-dense, unprocessed, wholesome foods helps support your body during and after cancer treatment.”

– Carolyn Matthews, M.D.

**Medical Oncologist and Director of Integrative Medicine
Texas Oncology–Baylor Charles A. Sammons Cancer Center**

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During treatment, the body uses energy to repair tissue and maintain its strength, so a diet high in calories and protein is beneficial for many patients. This isn't an excuse to eat anything you crave – calories should be from nutritious, wholesome foods. “A healthy diet during cancer treatment should follow similar principles to a healthy diet before and after treatment,” said Dr. Matthews. “A diet rich in fruits and vegetables, healthy fats such as avocados and nuts, and lean meats or wild fish, and limited in processed foods and sugar can benefit anyone.” As always, stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water. When considering a supplement, check with your doctor to make sure it doesn't interact with treatment. Additionally, patients who abstain from certain foods for

religious reasons may want to reconsider temporary diet changes in consultation with their physician and religious advisor.

One side effect of cancer treatment can make eating healthy difficult – loss of appetite, whether it is due to nausea, changes in smell or taste, or other reasons. Medications are available to help increase appetite, decrease nausea, and treat and prevent mouth problems, although they are not perfect solutions. Consider consulting a clinical nutritionist or registered dietitian for personalized advice, including suggested changes in eating schedules or adding certain foods to help maintain proper nutrition despite side effects. “If you're having trouble eating full meals,” says Dr. Matthews, “try grazing on nutrient rich-foods throughout the day.”

During treatment, nutritional needs will likely change, but giving your body the right fuel means it can focus on what's most important – healing.

Remedies for Side Effects: An Introduction to CAM

Q: What is Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)?

A: Complementary and alternative medicine, or CAM, is a set of practices designed to supplement traditional medicine. CAM is often used to help alleviate side effects, such as pain, nausea, soreness, or anxiety. CAM practices include massage therapy, acupuncture, aromatherapy, guided visualization or meditation, relaxation techniques, movement therapy (like tai chi or yoga), spinal manipulation (such as chiropractic adjustments), or herbal dietary supplements.

Q: How do I know if CAM is right for me?

A: Though many patients safely employ some form of CAM practices alongside traditional medicine, not all CAM practices are appropriate for everyone. Before starting a CAM technique, check with your physician to make sure it won't interfere with your treatment.



Ten Ways to Lift Your Load

Cancer treatment isn't easy, and it takes more than medicine to get you through. Here are a few ways to lift some of the physical or emotional load:



- 1. Stay close to family and friends:** Surround yourself with supportive and encouraging loved ones.
- 2. Find a helper:** Having someone to assist with daily chores allows more “you” time.
“My co-workers cleaned my house every two weeks while I was at chemo. What a blessing!”– Marily Durbin Considine, survivor, Texas Oncology–Round Rock
- 3. Adjust your work schedule:** Talk with your employer about taking the time off you need to recover or making adjustments to your workload or schedule.
- 4. Stay positive:** If music or a good book helps you stay in the “can do” zone, be sure to stock up. Put these and other essentials in a tote bag that is easy to take with you on treatment days.
“Never give in to sorrow. Keep living, stay strong.” – Glenda Martin, patient, Texas Oncology–Paris
- 5. Say “yes” to help:** Accept meals, yard work, childcare and other things your loved ones offer.
- 6. Eat healthy:** In conjunction with your physician, consult a registered dietitian or clinical nutritionist for specialized advice on eating healthy.
“I always tell patients, watch your diet and keep the faith.”– Keeva Jackson, front office coordinator and patient, Texas Oncology–Plano
- 7. Discover support groups:** Connect with others who have first-hand experience of what you are going through.
“I met my ‘soul sista’ Teresa at my second chemo treatment... sitting right across from me. Cancer brought us together, and we are now forever friends!” – Valerie Wright, survivor, Texas Oncology–Plano
- 8. Find humor:** Seek out people who help you laugh and find the lighter side of things throughout your day.
- 9. Try something new:** Use “down time” during treatment to pick up a new author, genre of movies, or restful hobby.
- 10. Stay active:** Incorporate moderate physical activities, with your physician’s guidance.

Sustaining the Spirit

Cancer treatment is often tough and it impacts more than the physical body. Difficult treatments and discouraging news can test the strongest of spirits. Caring for patients means caring for the whole person and finding ways to keep spirits high.

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“Positive attitudes and thoughts from very close friends got me through treatment.”

– Susan Allman

Patient, Texas Oncology–Austin North and Texas Oncology Austin–Midtown
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Dr. Timothy George of Texas Oncology–Odessa encourages his patients facing emotionally painful moments to seek comfort outside themselves. Dr. George finds such comfort through his religious faith; for others, it may be found through time with family and friends. “Facing difficult moments with comfort outside the present circumstances means that you can face your situation with peace,” says Dr. George. “Patients who do not find that peace often react with anger or denial in difficult circumstances.”

For even the most private people, cancer treatment can seem lonely, and at those times, a close network of loved ones who provide support and encouragement is especially important. Whether it’s having a close friend to talk with after doctors’ appointments, church friends, or a social group that elevates your spirits, a supporting community encourages and helps lift the emotional burden of treatment.

Throughout the highs and lows of cancer treatment, spiritual support can provide comfort and peace of mind. Many Texas Oncology locations have support groups and access to counselors who are able to provide emotional support to patients, or you may wish to turn to a family pastor. When you share the emotional burden with your loved ones, the burden becomes lighter. Surrounded by the critical support of family and friends, you never have to face cancer alone.



The New Normal: Surviving and Thriving After Cancer



The transition from cancer patient to cancer survivor often is a challenging journey. During treatment, energy and activity are all around you. A team of medical professionals surrounds patients, often with added emotional and other critical support from friends and family.

In the weeks and months after treatment ends, patients can feel alone, confused, and uncertain. With less frequent hands-on care, patients must take on far greater responsibility for managing all aspects of their “new normal” – their life and lifestyle as a cancer survivor.

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“A survivorship plan, a comprehensive roadmap for life after cancer can bring order and structure. Your medical team can help by providing complete details about follow-up medicines, treatment, tests, scans, and appointments.”

– Sara Toth

Nurse Practitioner, Texas Oncology–Austin Central

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But there’s more to survivorship than medicine. That’s why formal programs are emerging in many cancer care practices, including Texas Oncology, which launched a survivorship program last October.

The following guiding principles of survivorship programs can help patients create an individualized plan for surviving, and thriving, after cancer treatment:

- **Maintain an exercise routine:** Physical activity helps keep your immune system healthier and lowers your risk of recurrence. It also benefits your mood, stress levels, and general well-being.
- **Adopt a healthy, nutritious diet:** Together with inactivity, an unhealthy diet is a factor in as many as one-third of cancer deaths. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, hydrate with water, and limit alcohol consumption.
- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Extra weight can mask symptoms or add complications in case of a recurrence.
- **Get it in writing:** Ask your medical team to write down a history of your treatment, screening recommendations, and physical changes that your general practitioner should know. Share this with your doctors.
- **Get emotional and psychological support:** Worry about cancer recurrence is normal, but letting it rule your life is not healthy. Get advice on available support groups and join in.

Your new normal will put you back in the driver’s seat for your rest of life journey. A comprehensive survivorship roadmap will make the trip go more smoothly.

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- Cancer Fact Sheets

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Fast Facts

- Nutrition to Lower Disease Risk
- Physical Activity
- Caregiver Tips

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About Texas Oncology

As an independent oncology practice, Texas Oncology is comprised of more than 350 physicians and more than 120 sites of service throughout Texas and southeastern Oklahoma and is a pioneer in community-based cancer care. Patients are treated with today’s most advanced, effective cancer technologies and treatments, and have the opportunity to take part in some of the most promising clinical trials in the nation for new drugs and treatments for a broad range of cancers, near the support of family and friends. Texas Breast Specialists and Texas Urology Specialists are a part of Texas Oncology.

Learn more at 1-888-864-ICAN (4226) or www.TexasOncology.com.

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