

## Nutrition Guidelines

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Should I supplement my diet with vitamins and minerals?**

At present there is no evidence that vitamin and mineral supplements can help fight cancer during treatment. In fact, large doses of some vitamins may even stop your treatment from working the way it should. We know that patients who eat well during treatment are better able to cope with their cancer. Food is the best source of vitamins and minerals. However, vitamin and mineral supplements may be beneficial for patients with a poor dietary intake. Discuss your individual needs with your doctor before taking any vitamin and mineral supplements.

#### **Should I be eating organic foods?**

The term “organic” means foods grown without pesticides and genetic modifications. Currently, there is no evidence that organic foods are better for you than non-organic foods. In general, always thoroughly wash your fruits and vegetables before eating them.

#### **Should I be eating soy foods or taking soy supplements?**

Recent studies have determined that moderate amounts (up to three servings) of soy foods (tofu, tempeh, soy milk, soy yogurt, soy cheese, soybeans, soy nuts, and soy flour) can be consumed as part of your daily diet while on cancer treatment. These studies have only looked at soy foods, not soy dietary supplements. Therefore, it is best to avoid large amounts of soy supplements (powdered soy protein and soy pills) until more research has been done. This should be followed by all patients, including those who have breast, endometrial, or ovarian cancers.

#### **Should I avoid sugar?**

Presently, there is no evidence that eating sugar during treatment will make your cancer worse. It is important to choose healthy foods during treatment. Limiting intake of sugary foods is recommended as a part of a healthy diet.

#### **Should I avoid artificial sweeteners?**

Common artificial sweeteners include aspartame (Equal®) and saccharin (Sweet’ n Low®). There is no evidence that either sweetener has a negative effect on cancer treatment.

#### **Should I avoid red meats?**

Red meats are a good source of dietary protein and calories. Eating an adequate amount of calories and protein during treatment is important. With the exception of very lean ground beef, beef sirloin and beef or pork tenderloin red meats are generally very high in saturated fat and therefore they are regarded as less healthy than other good sources of protein which are lower in saturated fat such as skinless poultry, non-fried fish and seafood, low fat milk, eggs, beans and nuts. Depending on how you progress through your treatment you may or may not find red meat a useful source of calories and protein. Limiting intake of fatty red meats is recommended as a part of a healthy diet. But making changes in your diet, such as cutting back or avoidance of red meats, may be better served once your treatment has ended.

**If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.**