

Nutrition tips after discharge from hospital

It is common that you might struggle with eating and drinking during your hospital stay. This could be for a variety of reasons including poor appetite, taste changes, mouth ulcers, nausea, vomiting or a change in bowel movements. So, nutrition is extremely important in your recovery. Follow these tips to get your nutrition back on track when you leave hospital.

Eat little and often

- When you leave hospital it may take time for your appetite to return to normal.
- Eating smaller meals and snacks regularly will help you build your appetite and intake gradually.
- Try to have 6 small meals per day, or a **small snack** every 3 hours throughout the day.

Choose high protein, high energy foods

- Chemotherapy and stem cell transplantation can increase the amount of calories you require to meet your needs. Therefore often we do not focus too much on **healthy eating** at this point in time.
- Choosing foods that are more energy dense such as full-fat dairy foods, oils, nuts and seeds, puddings and desserts can help you to meet your calorie requirements.
- Protein is essential in every cell in our bodies to repair and regenerate. Therefore, it is essential that you get enough protein from your diet. High protein foods include: meat, chicken, fish, eggs, legumes, milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- Once you are back to eating full meals aim to follow a healthy diet again. You can refer to Macmillan 'Healthy Eating and Cancer' Booklet or World Cancer Research Fund 'Eating Well During Cancer', both available online.

Monitor your weight

- You may have experienced some weight loss during your hospital admission.
- If you have scales at home, hop on once a week to check that your weight.
- If your weight is continuing to decrease **one month** after discharge, let your GP, consultant or CNS know.

Follow food safety guidelines

- Chemotherapy and stem cell transplants suppress your immune system and cause you to become neutropenic.
- Even after your neutrophils return to a normal range, medications can suppress your immune system.

When preparing food please ensure you:

- ◇ Wash your hands frequently
- ◇ Buy and store food safely
- ◇ Avoid takeaways, buffets and street food — choose good quality restaurants if eating out
- ◇ Ensure meat, eggs and fish are well-cooked
- ◇ Avoid sauces and dressings made with raw egg
- ◇ Avoid unpasteurised dairy ie. Camembert, Brie, Stilton, goats cheese or raw milk and other dairy products
- ◇ Avoid probiotic yogurts or drinks.



Monitor your symptoms

- Make sure you are taking your medications as prescribed, including anti-sickness and anti-diarrhoeal tablets.
- If you are still experiencing symptoms for **two weeks** post discharge, get in touch with your GP or Consultant who can review our medications and refer you to a dietitian if necessary.

For further information contact the Dietitians at King's College Hospital: 020 3299 9000