



<https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk>

## PREHABILITATION - GETTING READY FOR TREATMENT

Prehabilitation (prehab) is about getting your body ready for treatment, whether that is surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy or immunotherapy.

It can involve improving your nutrition, physical fitness and psychological wellbeing. At your diagnosis your healthcare team may screen you for any problems in these three areas. Taking action early to address any problems can help you tolerate your treatment, have fewer side effects or cope better. In turn this can get you through your treatment journey and help you recover.



This leaflet outlines some of the things you might wish to consider in relation to your diet in the weeks running up to treatment.

### **The importance of a balanced diet**

Being as well-nourished as possible before you start your treatment can help you deal with problems that might arise along the way. Enjoying what you eat is important too.

A balanced diet needs to include food from all the food groups to make sure your body works well, these include beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins, starchy foods, fruit and vegetables and dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt and cheese or dairy alternatives.

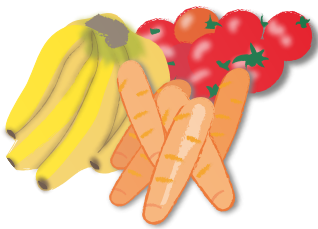
Ideally you should eat enough calories (energy) and enough protein to keep your weight steady and keep as strong as possible. If you are underweight or have lost weight unintentionally then you may be advised to try and gain a little weight.

Even if you are overweight, losing weight at this time may not be recommended but instead ensure you avoid gaining more excess weight.

### **A balanced diet includes:**

- enough **calories** to give you the energy to perform your everyday activities
- enough **protein** to keep your muscles strong and your immune system working. This is important before and during treatment - if you are wondering if you are eating enough protein see more information on high protein foods in the leaflet - 'Protein, why it is important and where to find it'

[www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/proteinideas.pdf](https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/proteinideas.pdf)



- five portions of **fruit and vegetables** each day which provide fibre and vitamins and minerals – one portion is 3 tablespoons of vegetables or one medium piece of fruit or two smaller pieces of fruit or a handful of small fruits such as grapes or strawberries. A glass of fruit juice or smoothie can count as one of your five a day

- **starchy foods** such as potatoes, rice, noodles, pasta, bread, cereals – these provide energy but also fibre especially when wholegrain
- plenty of **fluids** to keep you hydrated – aim to drink between 1.5 and 2.5 litres of non-alcoholic fluids a day and enough to keep your urine pale straw colour



To help understand your individual needs the Malnutrition Pathway team has produced 3 leaflets that give further advice on diet:

- **Eating Well** – this leaflet gives advice on how to eat well and keep as healthy as possible [www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet\\_green.pdf](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet_green.pdf)
- **Your Guide to Making the Most of Your Food** – this leaflet provides some simple ideas on how you can get the most nutrition from the food you are eating and is helpful if you have a poor appetite, have lost weight unintentionally or are underweight and need to increase your energy and nutrient intake - [www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet\\_yellow.pdf](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet_yellow.pdf)
- **Nutrition Drinks (known as Oral Nutritional Supplements)** – this leaflet is for those people who have been prescribed oral nutritional supplements by their healthcare professional. It gives general advice on getting the most from these supplements, for example advice on cooking with supplements and storage [www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet\\_red.pdf](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet_red.pdf)

### Other aspects to consider

- You may find it helpful to make daily meal plans so you can create a helpful shopping list with foods you would like to include to meet your needs
- As you might have 'off days' when your appetite is poor or you are lacking energy consider stocking up your freezer and store cupboard with easy to prepare or easy to eat foods and snacks (the British Dietetic Association has produced a helpful leaflet on this and although it was created for older people it is a great source of ideas for anyone preparing for treatment <https://bit.ly/3GX2Vmm> )
- Keep as physically active as possible – continue to do the activities you enjoy especially those that help maintain your strength, for some that might be a daily run or cycle, for others it might be a gentle walk around the neighbourhood or garden. Try not to sit for long periods of time as this may lead to muscle loss and tiredness
- If you are diabetic ensure you check your blood sugar regularly and speak to your diabetes nurse or GP about how you might best manage your condition during your treatment

**Cautionary note:** *If you are having difficulty in maintaining your weight, have a reduced appetite, swallowing issues or other dietary issues or concerns that are preventing you from eating well contact a member of your healthcare team (e.g. nurse, doctor, pharmacist) as soon as possible. You may be referred to a dietitian for individual advice or you can ask to be referred to a dietitian yourself if you are concerned.*