



## TIPS FOR MANAGING NUTRITIONAL NEEDS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Having cancer is challenging, but it can be particularly stressful during special times of the year. During the holidays, when it is often a time of festivities, family, friends and food, it can also be a stressful and an overwhelming time—especially if you are not interested in food or eating because of symptoms related to your disease or treatment.

People caring for or living with pancreatic cancer may find eating during the holiday season particularly challenging. There are many common digestive symptoms that people with pancreatic cancer may experience, including loss of appetite, taste changes, weight loss, diarrhea, nausea, and general discomfort.

Well-meaning caregivers, family and friends trying to be helpful may not realize that their gifts of holiday candies and homemade goodies, and offers to bring over “your favorite foods” may not be appealing or even appetizing. Even worse, they may aggravate your symptoms. When you’re not feeling well, it can be very difficult to tell the people who care for you that you are not able to accept their kind gestures and offerings of food.

Try to think about the reasons why you are not hungry or having difficulty with proper nutrition and seek out the help you need. These nutritional tips are for informational purposes only. They are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Talk to your healthcare team for nutritional advice or specific questions you have about managing your condition or that of a loved one.

Here are some questions that may help you identify some of the challenges that can affect your ability to enjoy foods:

### ***1. Are you experiencing nausea or upset stomach?***

If you are nauseated, have you been prescribed anti-nausea medication? If your current anti-nausea medication is not working for you, be sure to talk with your healthcare team about different dosing, timing and/or medication changes.

### ***2. Are you experiencing symptoms of poor digestion such as gas, bloating, cramping and diarrhea?***

Talk to your doctor about enzyme insufficiency, a common symptom related to pancreatic cancer, to determine if you might benefit from pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy. If you already take enzymes, discuss adjusting your dose with your medical team. Most importantly, try not to go too long without eating. Also be sure to eat small, more frequent meals or snacks. Try to “graze” a little bit throughout the day. Eating small, frequent meals instead of large meals is often a very helpful way to manage digestive symptoms.

### ***3. Does food taste different or even taste bad?***

Often when not hungry or eating regular meals, we forget to take care of our mouths, which can affect taste. Try these simple suggestions to keep your mouth clean and healthy: Brush your teeth after each meal or snack. Avoid commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol and irritate your mouth. Rinse at least 3 to 5 times a day with a homemade mouth rinse (recipe below) to keep your mouth tasting and feeling fresh. It is also helpful to experiment with a variety of herbs and spices that can add extra flavor to your foods. See the helpful chart on the next page.

### ***4. Are smells bothering you and diminishing your appetite?***

Try eating foods and beverages that are not piping hot. Foods that are room temperature, cool, or frozen have a less overpowering aroma. Avoid eating in a room where food is cooked to help avoid odors and other smells. Try to avoid cooking foods with strong odors such as fish, onions, cabbage, etc. Open windows while eating or try enjoying your meal outdoors.

### 5. Are you too tired to even think about eating? Are you having trouble sleeping?

It is important to talk with your healthcare team about your fatigue and difficulties sleeping. Your healthcare team may have suggestions to help improve sleep quality. Being active and staying hydrated can help you to feel less fatigued. When attempting to eat, try to eat foods that are truly easy to eat. Enjoy simple foods like hot or cold cereal and milk, soup in a mug, slices or cubes of cheese, trail mix, milkshakes, smoothies or commercial nutritional beverages. Ask for family and friends to help with shopping, meal preparation and clean-up.

### 6. When family and friends offer to bring something over for you, here are some food ideas:

- Provide specific ideas about what sounds good to you. Every bite counts!
- Provide a list of your dietary restrictions so that well-meaning friends and family do not unintentionally bring foods that may aggravate your symptoms.
- Sometimes your favorite standbys can be the best and most appetizing things to eat. Consider providing family and friends with your special recipes.
- You can also experiment with new foods during this time; some people find that new foods become their favorites.
- Have family or friends help you make a shopping list and have them do the shopping!

### Here are some fun and festive non-food holiday gift ideas:

- Fuzzy or silly socks
- A festive hat or head covering
- A new pair of holiday pajama pants
- A festive holiday shirt, sweatshirt or sweater
- A lap blanket or throw
- A poinsettia, holiday wreath or candle
- A vial of a soothing aroma or oil
- A favorite movie...how about a holiday classic, a comedy, a little romance, or Western?
- A book on tape or CD
- A holiday music CD
- A blank journal or notebook for you to write in
- Help with your holiday cards
- Help with putting up your holiday decorations

### Homemade Mouth Rinse:

Mix fresh daily.

- 4 cups of water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Swish and spit before and after meals as needed; do not swallow.

### Flavor Fixes

THE ISSUE	QUICK FIX
Red meats taste strange	Substitute other proteins such as chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, dairy, beans, or tofu.
Lack of taste, "cardboard"	Season foods with tart flavors, such as lemon, citrus, vinegar, or pickled foods.
Metallic taste	Avoid using metal utensils; use plastic utensils instead. Add extra flavor to foods with spices such as onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, or mint.
Salty, Bitter or Sour Taste	Try adding sweetening agents such as sugar, maple syrup, or honey to help enhance the taste.
Sweet taste	Add six drops of lemon or lime juice or until sweet taste is muted.

The **Cooking. Comfort. Care. Nourishment for the Pancreatic Cancer Fight** program was created by Celgene Corporation and in collaboration with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, Meals to Heal and Chef Michael Ferraro. These nutritional tips were developed by registered dietitians who are board-certified specialists in oncology nutrition affiliated with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network and at Meals to Heal.