

A GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING AND BEING ACTIVE



the women's
the royal women's hospital
victoria australia

Eating well and being active after treatment for endometrial cancer is important for your recovery. It improves your health and wellbeing and reduces your risk of developing conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

Keeping a healthy weight, eating well and leading an active lifestyle may even lower your risk of other cancers developing in the future.

Healthy eating

For good health and vitality, all women should aim to:

- » Eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of foods from each of the food groups. Try to plan meals and snacks around:
 - 5 servings per day of vegetables. Different colours will give you a good range of nutrients
 - 2 servings per day of fresh, tinned or dried fruit
 - 1 serving of a cereal or grain-based food at each main meal. Keep it interesting with wholemeal or multi-grain bread, oats, natural muesli, rice, pasta, noodles, and grains such as barley, buckwheat, bulgur or quinoa
 - 2 servings per day of protein-rich foods. The best choices are those that are low in saturated fat such as lean red meat, skinless chicken, fish, eggs, legumes (such as chickpeas, kidney beans or lentils), tofu, nuts and seeds
 - 2 to 3 servings per day of dairy foods (or dairy alternatives), such as low fat milk (or calcium-fortified soy, rice or almond milk), yoghurt or cheese. These foods are rich in calcium and protein. Women aged over 50 should aim for 4 serves per day
 - small amounts of healthy fats, such as olive, canola or peanut oil, margarine, avocado, nuts and seeds.

See eatforhealth.gov.au for further information about serving sizes.

- » Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water. 6 to 8 glasses per day is a good goal.
- » Focus on healthy fats. Choose mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (the heart-healthy fats) found in oils, margarines, nuts, seeds and avocado. These fats still have the same amount of kilojoules as the less healthy types so small quantities are best. Boost your intake of omega-3 fats by including salmon, tuna, sardines, trout and mackerel at least twice a week, and try using canola or flaxseed oil.

- » Keep a limit on foods that are high in saturated fats such as pies, pastries, sausages, fatty meats, fried takeaway food, biscuits, cakes, butter, and full cream dairy foods.
- » Go for wholegrains or low GI carbohydrates such as multi-grain or sourdough bread, oats, brown or basmati rice, and legumes. These are rich in nutrients and fibre, and keep you feeling satisfied for longer.
- » Watch the sugar. Too much sugar adds unwanted kilojoules and supplies little to no nutritional value. A little jam or honey on your grainy toast or is OK but try to limit your intake of soft drinks, juices, lollies, chocolate, cakes, biscuits and ice-cream.
- » If you choose to drink, keep to one to two standard drinks per day and leave a few days each week alcohol-free. Alcohol has both positive and negative effects on health. It may lower the risk of heart disease at low levels of intake. However, at higher levels it is linked to the development of some cancers. It is also a concentrated source of kilojoules and can contribute to weight gain.

Should I take a supplement?

Current evidence suggests that dietary supplements (such as vitamin and mineral, and herbal supplements) are unlikely to be of benefit unless you have a diagnosed nutrient deficiency or if you are struggling to eat a balanced diet.

Organic foods

At present, studies have not shown that organic foods offer a benefit over conventionally grown foods in lowering your risk of developing other cancers, or having a recurrence. Eating plenty of vegetables and fruit, whether organic or not, is good for your health.

Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight and keeping it off will improve your health and help protect you from a range of diseases.

It is not always easy to lose weight, especially if you have struggled with weight loss for a long time. It can also be harder for people who live on their own, or who are not used to preparing and cooking food.

Health professionals such as dietitians, GPs, physiotherapists, and exercise physiologists can give you support and advice on maintaining a healthy weight. In the meantime, here are some useful tips for managing your weight:

- » Forget 'dieting'. Avoid the on/off dieting cycle. Aim for gradual and realistic dietary changes that can be maintained in the long-term.
- » Start the day with a healthy breakfast. Research shows that people who eat breakfast daily are more successful at losing weight and maintaining a healthy body weight.
- » Eat regular meals and snacks. The aim is to spread your food intake evenly across the day to avoid becoming too hungry, which can lead to less healthy food choices.
- » It helps to be organised. Plan your meals in advance and write shopping lists. Pack a healthy lunch and snacks to take to work or if you're going out for the day.
- » Create an environment at home (or work) that makes it easy to eat well. Keep your fridge or pantry stocked with healthy snacks such as fruit, yoghurt, or grainy crackers and cheese instead of 'temptations'.
- » Pay attention to your appetite signals. Learn to understand the difference between true physical hunger and those non-hunger cues that trigger the desire to eat. Try not to use food for comfort or to manage a stressful situation. Indulge in a relaxing or enjoyable activity instead.
- » You don't have to eat 'perfectly'. All foods have a place in a healthy balanced diet, including those that are less healthy. Just keep them to small portions, eat slowly and mindfully, and enjoy your food!

To find an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) in your local area (Dietitians Association of Australia): daa.asn.au/for-the-public/find-an-apd/

Keeping active

It's important to be physically active and to spend less time being inactive. This is important for everyone.

Physical activity has many benefits. It improves muscle strength, physical functioning and your recovery after cancer treatment. It also improves your immunity, energy levels, mood, and quality of life.

The right type and amount of physical activity for you depends on what you are able to do and the activities you enjoy.

When you have been unwell or you have been feeling low or depressed, it can be hard to find the energy or motivation to be active. If you have a health condition that limits your ability to exercise, or you are just not sure where to start, it may be useful to talk with a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist for an exercise plan to suit you.

The key is to start slowly and gradually increase the amount of physical activity you do. If you are doing very little exercise, you might start by walking 5 to 10 minutes each day.

Your aim is to meet the recommended physical activity guidelines for the general population:

These are:

- » 30 minutes of exercise 5 days per week (for a total of 150 minutes each week) of moderate intensity physical activity

OR

- » 15 minutes of exercise 5 days per week (for a total of 75 minutes each week) of vigorous intensity physical activity

PLUS

- » 2 sessions per week of muscle strengthening activities. These include exercises you could do at home such as push-ups, squats or lunges, or household tasks such as gardening. It also includes exercises at the gym such as those using weights or other resistance machines, or Pilates and yoga classes.

What's the difference between 'moderate intensity' and 'vigorous intensity'?

Moderate intensity activities take some effort, but you are still able to talk while doing them.

Vigorous intensity activities require more effort and make you 'huff and puff.'

Moderate intensity activities	Vigorous intensity activities
A brisk walk	Jogging
Swimming	Aerobics (try a DVD at home)
Dancing	Fast cycling
Tennis or golf	Social sports such as netball or basketball
Jobs around the house like cleaning floors, or raking leaves	Tasks that involve lifting, carrying or digging

You may like to combine moderate intensity and vigorous intensity activities to meet your weekly target. For example, three 30-minute brisk walks and two 15-minute bike rides. Check with your local council for information on community walking groups and other classes or groups.

Increasing your level of physical activity beyond these recommendations will provide even greater health benefits, especially for those looking to lose weight.

Reduce inactivity

It's also important to limit the time you spend sitting each day. This includes sitting at a computer, watching TV, and playing electronic games. Try to break up long periods of sitting by getting up and going for a quick walk.

Making small changes can make a big difference. Try these ideas:

- » Find opportunities for physical activity in your daily routines. For short trips, try to walk or ride a bike instead of driving. When driving, park some distance away from your destination and walk. Get off the bus or tram one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way. Use the stairs instead of the lift or escalator.

- » Be active at work. Walk to deliver a message rather than emailing or making a call. Use your lunch break to enjoy a short walk outside. Consider parking an extra 5 to 10 minutes away from your workplace and walking.
- » Include physical activity into social events. Schedule a 'walk and talk' with friends rather than sitting at a café. Try activities like dancing, squash, or team sports.

Remember: Any physical activity is better for you than none at all. Start by setting some realistic goals for activities you genuinely enjoy and build on those as you feel more confident and stronger.

Locate a physiotherapist in your local area by visiting the Australian Physiotherapy Association's webpage: physiotherapy.asn.au/APAWCM/Controls/FindaPhysio.aspx

To find an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) in your local area visit Exercise and Sports Science Australia's webpage: exerciseright.com.au

One more thing...

Mental health and emotional well-being are just as important to recovery as healthy eating and regular physical activity. Activities like meditation, yoga, and relaxation techniques are good ways to improve mood and well-being.

Where to get more information

Australian Dietary Guidelines

Advice about the amount and kinds of foods we need to eat for health and wellbeing. eatforhealth.gov.au

Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour

Department of Health information about the benefits of an active lifestyle, as well as practical tip and ideas. health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/pasb

Exercise is Medicine

Research-based advice on physical activity for health. exerciseismedicine.org.au

The Better Health Channel

Quality and evidence-based health and medical information from the Victorian state government. betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Women's Health Information Centre

Royal Women's Hospital
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