

Proper Nutrition Essential in Comprehensive Cancer Care

By Jack P. Bleeker

Proper nutrition is important for all individuals, but can be critically important for those who are battling cancer. For this reason, proper nutritional regimens are now being included in comprehensive cancer treatment plans and are a staple of integrative oncology. While proper nutrition cannot, in and of itself, cure cancers, it can provide strength and health to a patient who will need it as they battle their disease. It is not only symptoms of aggressive cancers like [mesothelioma](#), but also their treatment with methods like chemotherapy that will demand proper nutrition.

Malnutrition can be extremely harmful to a cancer treatment regimen, and must be kept in mind when considering each individual patient's treatment roadmap. Cachexia and anorexia are common causes of malnutrition in cancer patients. Nearly all patients who develop extensive disease will battle anorexia, with common symptoms being weight loss and loss of appetite. Cachexia is a debilitating wasting syndrome causing weakness and loss of weight and is particularly common in those battling cancers of the lung (such as [pleural mesothelioma](#)), pancreas, and gastrointestinal tract. Cachexia is similar to starvation in healthy individuals, but cancer patient's bodies are unable to make the adjustments to slow down the use of nutrients.

Proper eating habits for those battling cancer and undergoing cancer treatment can help fight the breakdown of muscle strength, enhance tissue reconstruction, and stave off infection in those with compromised immune health. Those who are able to maintain their health through nutrition and exercise will typically be eligible to receive more aggressive dosages of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Each individual patient's treatment plan will require the advice of cancer specialists and physicians who are able to make an assessment of the patient's overall health. Dr. David Sugarbaker of the Brigham and Womens Hospital and Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, MA will work closely with each of his patients battling thoracic cancers, including malignant mesothelioma, and develop an individual [mesothelioma treatment guide](#), including recommendations on proper cancer nutrition.

While malignant mesothelioma is far from the only cancer that demands proper nutrition in patients, it is particularly important given the current lack of a [mesothelioma cure](#) in those patients battling aggressive later-stage disease. That being said, all cancer patients will benefit from the strength and overall health that proper and sound recommendations doctors and nutritional specialists can provide them with. Cancer patients as well as family members and caregivers seeking further information about proper nutrition in cancer care should seek the advice of these individuals and apply them to a patient's particular circumstances and needs.

Reference

National Cancer Institute. *Overview: Nutrition in Cancer Care* 2005

Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard University. *Nutritional Resources Overview* . Boston, MA 2009

Information courtesy of Mesothelioma.com

4/29/2010