A Plant-Centered Approach to Optimizing Nutrition During and After Cancer Care

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Why is nutrition important during or after cancer treatment?

Maintaining a healthy diet and body weight is important both during and after treatment. During treatment, a healthy diet supplies the body with fuel and nutrients for repair and healing. After treatment, eating a balanced diet can help reduce future cancer risk and maintain overall health.

A large proportion of cancer cases in the United States are preventable. It is estimated that one-third of some of the most common cancers and one-quarter of cancers overall are preventable through healthy dietary patterns and exercise. Additionally, one-third of cancer deaths are related to obesity and overweight, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity.

Research shows that a healthful diet rich in a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans/legumes, low in red and processed meat, and an overall low glycemic load reduces cancer risk and is associated with improved outcomes for those with cancer.

Even if you already eat a healthy diet, it may be helpful to meet with a dietitian to talk about your current eating habits. Sometimes improvements or certain changes can be made for a better quality of life.

The integrative medicine center follows the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund (AICR/WCRF) recommendations for cancer prevention. Our services can help you manage weight and change your diet in a healthy way. A consult may help you:

• Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
• Create strategies to develop eating plans that are reasonable and sustainable
• Identify food sources of healthy nutrients and how to incorporate them into your everyday diet
• Develop techniques to improve awareness of what you eat
• Work with your family to help you reach your nutritional goals
**Summer Squash Salad**

*Dietitian’s Note: This salad incorporates the ubiquitous summer squash and zucchini. This salad is packed with cancer fighting nutrients. Ingredients can be easily substituted. Not a fan of mint? Use cilantro or basil instead.

Serves 4

**Ingredients:**

- 1 Squash
- ½ cup quinoa
- ¼ cup capers
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp honey
- ¼ cup fresh mint, leaves removed from stems and chopped
- ¼ cup roasted nuts (almond, walnut, pine nuts, sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds)

**Instructions:**

1. Place uncooked quinoa in skillet and let roast for 3–5 minutes. Add ¾ cup water. Cover skillet and let quinoa simmer for 15 minutes until done.
2. Using a vegetable peeler slice long, thin slices of squash and zucchini. Put in a bowl and place to the side.
3. In a small bowl add lemon juice, olive oil, mustard and honey. Wisk until ingredients are blended.
4. Cover the squash and zucchini with the vinaigrette.
5. Add the quinoa, parsley, mint and nuts. Serve immediately for a warm dish or refrigerate and serve chilled.