

Nutrition and Lifestyle

Information and tips on diet and lifestyle





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Dubin Breast Center
of The Tisch Cancer Institute

Nutrition and Lifestyle

Dealing with breast cancer and its treatments can be physically and mentally demanding. While just getting through this time may be your top priority, there are actions that you can take to feel and function at your best. As with most behavior changes, you may find it easier to adjust if you incorporate new habits slowly and in small increments. Any change towards a healthier lifestyle will have benefits, and small changes over time will add up to great rewards.

Maintain or become a healthy weight

As Americans have begun to eat more and move less, being overweight or obese in this country is common. Vanity aside, maintaining or becoming a healthy weight can reduce your risk for a number of diseases. In healthcare, we use a formula called the body mass index or “BMI,” which indicates how healthy your weight is based on your height. To determine if you are an appropriate weight, ask one of your health practitioners where you fall on the BMI scale or use an online BMI calculator.

If you are overweight, the idea of weight loss can be quite daunting. Make small, short-term goals, and be sure to reward yourself along the way. Keep in mind that even a small loss toward your ideal weight can have great health benefits. Every bit counts! Your nutritionist can help you set goals and determine the best methods for sustainable weight management. If you are undergoing cancer treatment, make sure to ask your doctor if this is a good time to start a weight loss program.



Eat a plant-based diet

Eating well can make a big impact in your health and wellness as you go through the stages of cancer treatment and recovery. The American Institute for Cancer Research recommends eating a “plant-based” diet that includes a low intake of saturated fats. A plant-based diet does not necessarily mean a vegan or vegetarian diet. Rather, it encourages making the base of your meals plant-based with whole grains, vegetables, legumes, fruit, nuts, and seeds. Processed foods and animal foods, such as meat or dairy products, can contain high amounts of fats that have negative health consequences. To follow a plant-based diet, avoid using meat, dairy products, and processed foods as the centerpieces of your meals and start to think of these foods as condiments or side dishes. When choosing animal foods, generally opt for low-fat dairy products, lean cuts of meat, and fish. You can start by making a few plant-based meals or snacks per week and expanding your intake of plant foods over time.





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Increase beneficial foods and nutrients

Fiber: Eating a plant-based diet may make it easier for you to increase your intake of dietary fiber. Fiber is found naturally in whole grains, fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Its benefits include increased satiety (the feeling of being full), increased ease of weight management, helping to control blood sugar levels, and regulating digestion. To reap the greatest benefit from your foods, try to eat them in their “whole” state. Choose whole grain products instead of refined (e.g., quinoa instead of white rice) and consume whole fruits and vegetables instead of juices. Your goal for fiber intake should be about 25-30 grams per day. For more information on fiber, see the “Fiber Facts” handout.

Healthy fats: Replacing saturated and trans-fats in the diet (found in cuts of meat, dairy products, and processed foods) with unsaturated fats (found in fatty fish and plant foods such as oils, nuts, seeds, and avocados) can result in improved heart health and reduced risk for some cancers. Consistently consume moderate amounts of these fats with vegetable-rich meals to regulate blood sugar levels, increase feelings of satiety, and improve taste sensations. Fats are known to be “energy-dense,” meaning small portions are high in calories. Be mindful of your serving sizes when you begin to add these foods to your diet. In the traditional Mediterranean diet, the unsaturated fats of olive oil, fatty fish, nuts, and seeds are a major component, and some studies have shown a lower risk for breast cancer and other chronic diseases in women who follow this diet.

Vegetables: The fiber, vitamins, and minerals of vegetables make them excellent food choices. Additionally, many vegetables are very low in calories, so eating them can help you manage your weight. However, be aware that not all vegetables are created equally! Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and brussel sprouts have gained a reputation for being especially healthy for women with breast cancer.

On the other hand, starchy vegetables such as corn, peas, and potatoes are high in carbohydrate content and contain more calories than non-starchy vegetables such as asparagus or carrots. Starchy vegetables should be included only moderately in your diet.



Fiber Facts

Nutrition and Your Health

Post-operative constipation is quite common, even if you typically have regular bowel movements. The combination of anesthesia, pain medications, changes to your diet, fluid intake, and physical activity that occur before, during, and after surgery often contribute to post-operative bloating and constipation.

The good news is that eating fiber-rich foods and staying on top of fluid intake can help ease these symptoms and promote regularity. Increasing these fiber-rich foods slowly over the course of a few weeks post-surgery is a great way to ease your body back into a normal eating pattern and prevent constipation and its symptoms from getting worse. Follow these tips to get started:

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Fluids help the body process added fiber without discomfort. Aim for at least 8–10 cups (8 ounces = 1 cup) per day, and always have a reusable, BPA-free water bottle nearby to sip from throughout the day.
- **Choose whole grains.** Try brown rice, quinoa, farro, freekah, millet, whole wheat pasta, and whole grain breads as opposed to the “white” versions.
- **Read nutrition labels.** Look for 100% whole wheat, rye, oats, corn, barley, etc. as the first ingredients on packaged foods such as breads, cereals, and pastas and look for at least 3–4 grams of fiber per serving.
- **Cook with beans, legumes, and peas.** Choose dried or canned (just make sure you rinse them!), and add to soups, stews, chilis, or try a cold bean salad. No matter how you use them, colorful vegetables are a perfect accompaniment.
- **Choose fresh fruit and vegetables instead of juices.** Juices are stripped of fiber during processing and can also contain a ton of sugar. Stick with fresh, whole fruits and vegetables as much as possible, and make sure to eat the peels or skins (if edible).
- **Talk to your doctor or dietitian about calcium and iron supplements.** These could exacerbate constipation, and it’s helpful to inquire about smaller dosing if you’re taking these supplements.
- **Move more.** Regular physical activity can help decrease the amount of time it takes for food to move through the small intestine and helps promote regularity. After your surgery try walking 15–20 minutes a few times per day.
- **Aim to consume 25–35 grams of fiber per day.** Take inventory of approximately where you fall within this range now, and increase by 2–4 grams of fiber per week until you reach this range.



Fiber Facts

Fiber-Rich Foods	Serving Size	Fiber Content
Whole grains		
Brown rice	1 cup cooked	3.5 grams
Whole wheat or rye bread	1 slice	2 grams
Oatmeal (old fashioned)	1 cup cooked	4 grams
Quinoa	1 cup cooked	5 grams
Whole wheat pasta	1 cup cooked	6 grams
Farro	1 cup cooked	7 grams
Beans and Legumes		
Baked beans	1 cup cooked	10 grams
Lentils	1 cup cooked	16 grams
Black beans	1 cup cooked	15 grams
Split peas	1 cup cooked	16 grams
Kidney beans	1 cup cooked	18 grams
White beans	1 cup cooked	19 grams
Peanuts	1 ounce	3 grams
Nuts and Seeds		
Almonds	1 ounce	3.5 grams
Walnuts	1 ounce	2 grams
Pecans	1 ounce	3 grams
Pistachios	1 ounce	3 grams
Sunflower seeds	¼ cup	3 grams
Pumpkin seeds	¼ cup	1.5 grams
Vegetables		
Kale	1 cup cooked	3 grams
Cauliflower	1 cup cooked	5 grams
Broccoli	1 cup cooked	5 grams
Brussels sprouts	1 cup cooked	5 grams
Cabbage	1 cup cooked	4 grams
Potatoes (sweet, Russet)	1 medium (flesh and skin)	4 grams
Fruits		
Pear	1 medium	6 grams
Apple	1 medium	4 grams
Orange	1 medium	4 grams
Raspberries	1 cup	8 grams
Blueberries	1 cup	4 grams
Blackberries	1 cup	8 grams
Strawberries	1 cup	3 grams

Fiber Facts

Sample High-Fiber Diet

Breakfast	1–2 slices whole wheat or sprouted grain toast topped with 1 egg, 1/3 mashed avocado and tomato slices; Coffee or tea
Lunch	Salad with kale, spinach mix (>2 cups raw), 1/3 cup roasted Brussels sprouts or broccoli, 1/2 cup quinoa, sliced radish, sliced cucumber, 2 tsp sunflower seeds, 3 ounces grilled chicken or tofu in a light olive oil/red wine vinegar dressing
Dinner	1–2 cups of vegetarian chili with 1 cup spinach added, topped with 2 tbsp 2% Greek yogurt, small whole wheat roll
Snacks (1–2/day)	1 apple with 1 tbsp nut butter or 1/4 cup almonds, 6 ounces 0% Greek yogurt, 1/2 cup berries, 1 cup baby carrots and sliced celery mix, 1–2 tbsp hummus, 1–2 cups steamed organic edamame

Constipation Relief Fruit Paste Recipe

For a natural solution to constipation, try 2–3 teaspoons of this recipe each day.

Ingredients

1/2 pound prunes
1/2 pound raisins or pitted dates
1/2 pound figs
2 ounces Senna tea leaves (found at health food stores)
1/2 cup lemon juice

Instructions

Boil 2 cups of water, add the tea leaves and let soak for five minutes. Strain the tea and pour 1 cup of the tea liquid into a large pot, discard the rest. Add the fruit to this pot and boil for five minutes. Remove from heat; add the lemon juice and stir. Allow the mixture to cool. In a mixer, blender or food processor, turn the fruit mixture into a smooth paste. Spoon it into jars or freezer containers and store in the refrigerator or freezer.

Note: This fruit paste does not freeze solid, but keeps well in the freezer for up to 3 months. It can be spread on toast, mixed in with oatmeal, blended into a shake, or eaten by itself.



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Healthy Fats

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Replacing fats from animal-based and processed foods with those from plants and fish can result in reduced risk for heart disease, in addition to providing an array of other health benefits. Some excellent sources of fat include: oils, nuts and seeds, avocados, and salmon. A few are highlighted here:

Avocados are best known for their healthy, monounsaturated fats. They contain antioxidants and dietary fiber, as well as having anti-inflammatory and digestive properties. The nutrition and flavor of avocado is best preserved when eaten raw.

Extra virgin olive oil is the unrefined oil from the first olive pressing, and it is superior to other olive oils in both taste and health properties. Similar to avocados, extra virgin olive oil contains monounsaturated fats and has anti-inflammatory properties. It may also help to lower cholesterol and blood pressure along with reducing the risk for some cancers.

Walnuts are one of the only plant-based sources of the anti-inflammatory and heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Make sure to eat the flaky and slightly bitter skin of walnuts for optimal health benefits.

Salmon, like walnuts, is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, aiding cardiovascular and inflammatory health systems. The specific types of fatty acid found in salmon (EPA and DHA) may provide benefits for cognition and protection against some types of cancer, including breast cancer.

Coconut oil was long thought to be a villain due to its saturated fat content. However, this plant-based oil has actually demonstrated heart healthy properties by raising HDL, “good cholesterol.” Coconut is also full of antioxidants and makes an excellent plant-based replacement for butter when baking.



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Cruciferous Vegetables

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Cruciferous vegetables are often called the “super stars” of plant foods. They are **packed** with healthy nutrients and can be easily added to your diet.

Cruciferous Vegetables include: Arugula, bok choy, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens, kale, mustard greens, radish, rutabaga, turnip, and watercress. As a group, these vegetables are very high in vitamin A, vitamin C, folic acid (a B vitamin), and vitamin K. Some of these vitamins act as antioxidants, which can help to protect the body’s cells from damage. Cruciferous vegetables also tend to have high fiber and water contents, making them filling, low calorie foods that may also aid in digestion.

Phytochemicals are natural chemicals found in plant foods that have healthful effects. Some studies have found that the phytochemicals in cruciferous vegetables may help to defend against cancer.

Try to eat at least one serving of cruciferous vegetables per day; one serving is equal to ½ cup cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw.



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A Registered Dietitian is available at the Dubin Breast Center to provide our patients with individual counseling in the following areas:

- General wellness
- Weight management
- Side effect and symptom management
- Cooking and food preparation strategies

Meeting with a registered dietitian is a great opportunity to learn about how food plays a role in your health. During your nutrition consultation, your dietitian will work with you to create an individualized plan to help you feel and function at your best.

Nutrition consultations and follow-up visits are provided at no cost to all Dubin Breast Center patients. Please reach out to your clinical team for more information.



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Eating During Cancer Treatment

General goals: to provide your body with enough calories, protein and nutrients to help repair and build body tissues and keep your energy levels up.

In general, a plant-based diet is recommended during treatment (and beyond!), which includes colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins. However, the foods you are able to eat will also depend on treatment side effects, and it's important to remain flexible.



Q&A

Q. How should I eat if I have a decreased appetite?

A. Try eating small meals and snacks every few hours, rather than eating large meals. Make sure these snacks include a protein source whenever possible, which can be eggs, yogurt, cottage cheese, chicken, fish, turkey, nuts/nut butter, milk, tofu, etc. Try to take advantage of the times when you do have an appetite, and eat a larger meal. Keep favorite foods on hand if these are more appealing to you.

Q. How should I eat if I feel full quickly after eating?

A. Focus on having small meals and snacks throughout the day instead of large meals. Try to avoid drinking liquids during meals and instead, have them thirty minutes before or after. Avoid eating gas-producing and high-fiber foods, such as raw vegetables and fruits, beans, and whole grains, because they may make you feel full too quickly.

Q. How should I eat if I have nausea or vomiting?

A. Try to have small meals every few hours instead of large meals and stick with bland foods, such as toast, crackers, pretzels, yogurt, cream of wheat, potatoes, rice, or noodles. Sometimes, foods that are cold or room temperature may be easier to eat than foods that are hot. Make an effort to avoid greasy, spicy, high-fiber foods, and foods with strong odors; prioritize good hydration by sipping on fluids throughout the day. Ginger may help decrease nausea, and options to try include ginger tea, ginger beer, pickled ginger, ginger candies, and ginger snaps.

Q. How should I eat if I have diarrhea?

A. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, such as water, diluted juices, broth, caffeine-free teas, and coconut water. Stick with foods that are low in fiber, such as mashed potatoes, yogurt, noodles, applesauce, toast, cottage cheese, rice, eggs, and cream of wheat. Avoid caffeine, raw fruits and vegetables, and if you are sensitive, limit dairy products as they can exacerbate diarrhea.

Q. How should I eat if I have constipation?

A. Make sure to focus on maintaining adequate hydration by drinking at least 10 cups of fluids daily. Include foods that naturally promote bowel regularity, such as prunes (stewed or dried), prune juice, grapes, figs, and papaya. In general, make sure to eat a diet high in fiber and include whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and beans into your meals daily. Regular exercise can also help promote bowel regularity.



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Q. How should I eat if I have mouth soreness or dryness?

A. Eat foods that are soft, moist, and/or blended, as these are easy to chew and swallow; and use liquids to make dry foods moist, such as gravy on bread and milk on dry cereal. Drink plenty of fluids and make sure to brush your teeth and rinse your mouth often to decrease pain and help your appetite. Special mouthwashes that may help are Biotene (over the counter) or Magic Mouthwash (prescription). For mouth soreness, avoid foods and drinks that are spicy, salty, tart, very hot, and very cold. For mouth dryness, eating sweet or tart foods and liquids, such as lemonade, hard candy, and popsicles, may help your mouth make more saliva.

Q. How should I eat if my sense of taste or smell changes?

A. Try different flavors such as tart, salty, or sweet to find foods that you can tolerate, and add seasonings such as herbs and spices to make foods taste better. Try having meats at room temperature or cold, and if you cannot or do not eat meats, choose other good protein sources. These include Greek yogurt, eggs, nuts, nut butters, cheese, milk, shakes, and tofu. Brush your teeth and rinse your mouth often and eat with plastic utensils to decrease metallic tastes in the mouth.

Q. How should I eat if I often feel tired?

A. Have foods on-hand that take little or no work to prepare, such as Greek yogurts, cheese sticks, peanut butter, crackers, boxed soups, frozen entrees, vegetables, and fruits. Do not be afraid to ask for help with food shopping and meal preparation from friends and family—more often than not, they are more than happy to help. When you're feeling more energized, try to make batches of food that can be frozen and used for later. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids (at least 10 cups per day) and exercise regularly, which can help you feel more energized.

Q. How should I eat if I gain weight?

A. Try to make half of all your meals vegetables and fruits, which are naturally low in calories and high in nutrients and fiber. If you find yourself emotionally eating when you're stressed, sad, or afraid, focus on other strategies to help you cope. This can be exercise, calling a friend or family member, meditation, reading, or joining in support group activities.

Q. Are there foods I should avoid?

A. People who are going through cancer treatment may have a hard time fighting infections and food poisoning. Make sure to wash all raw fruits and vegetables very well, and wash your hands before and after preparing foods. Cook meats and eggs very well, and avoid raw foods (sushi, smoked salmon, shellfish), salad bars, deli meats, unpasteurized juices, milk, and cheese where bacterial contamination can be more likely.

Q. Can I meet with a nutritionist?

A. Yes! Our registered dietitian is always available to meet with you in person, speak with you on the phone, or answer questions via email.



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Exercise

Physical activity can reduce the risk for breast cancer and improve breast cancer related outcomes, and greater benefits are associated with higher levels of exercise post-diagnosis. The possible reasons for this positive effect are related to the promotion of optimal immune, anti-inflammatory, and metabolic functioning. Exercise can also help with the symptom or side effect management of many breast cancer treatments and can minimize bone loss.



We strongly recommend that you get at least 45-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity on most days of the week, and more is better. This activity does not need to be performed all at once, and it can be easily incorporated into your regular daily schedule. If you are crunched for time, you may find it easier to break up your exercise into 10-15 minute segments, 3-5 times per day. For basic health benefits, and especially if you have any physical limitations, you need only to perform moderate activity. Exercise to the point that you increase your energy level and not to the point of exhaustion.

Most importantly, exercise should be something that you find enjoyable. If you have never enjoyed going to the gym, there are plenty of alternatives... You can try a dance or yoga class or take a brisk walk with a friend. At Dubin, we offer two levels of walking groups that you are welcome to join.

Examples of enjoyable, low-impact exercises include:

- Swimming
- Water aerobics
- Bike riding
- Tennis
- Ice skating
- Roller skating or blading
- Pilates
- Aerobics

Limit your intake of alcohol

The way that alcohol affects health is complicated. Cardiovascular benefits from moderate red wine consumption have made alcohol popular in health media. However, there are no cancer benefits to drinking. In fact, even moderate alcohol intake is related to the development of many types of cancer. As little as two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women can increase the risk for developing these diseases. A number of studies have seen a connection between alcohol and breast cancer, and the type of alcohol (e.g., red wine vs. whiskey) does not change this observation. The exact mechanism is unknown, but the relationship may be due to



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the effect of alcohol on hormone levels. Our recommendation is to have less than one drink every other day and to consider limiting intake to social events or special occasions. (One drink is equivalent to 12 oz beer, 5 oz wine, or 1½ oz 80-proof liquor.) Examine when, why, and how much you drink. You may find that drinking is a habit, that it serves emotional purposes, or that it simply heightens a dining experience. Think of positive behaviors that can serve as a substitute for some of your drinking. If you think that you may have an issue of alcohol abuse, there is no better time to pursue a lifestyle change. Inform one of your Dubin healthcare providers, and we will connect you with appropriate resources.

Smoking

Quitting smoking is the single best healthy lifestyle choice you can make for yourself. Smoking is directly related to lung disease and lung cancer. It also plays a role in the development of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and many kinds of cancer, including throat, esophageal, tongue, stomach, and bladder. Furthermore, it can contribute to other types of illness such as peptic ulcers and infertility. It can cause severe illness in people who don't smoke through the inhalation of second-hand smoke, and can be particularly harmful for people having surgery by interfering with wound healing and increasing the risk of pneumonia.

- There are 4,800 chemicals in cigarettes including 69 which are known carcinogens.
- Nicotine is the addictive part of the cigarette and travels to the brain faster than medication delivered into a vein.
- Cessation of smoking often requires several attempts. Do not get discouraged if you quit and start again.

There are several resources available for smoking cessation:

- New York City has a hotline where you can get help. Call 311 and get free nicotine patches and gum.
- Call the American Lung Association for information and additional resources, or visit their "Stop Smoking" page online.
- The Mount Sinai Health System offers a few smoking cessation programs, please call 212-523-3606 for more information.

Stress Reduction:

Stress is defined as "your response to your environment." This can be either good or bad. Good stress is often a motivator to get up in the morning and be engaged in our lives. It shows that a person is adapting to the world around them. It energizes us, allows us to be creative, solve problems, and learn.



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Bad stress leads to fatigue, frustration, and irrational problem solving. When people are confronted with a stress-inducing event, they respond initially with a drop in energy while the mind understands what is happening to them. Next, there is a surge in energy while the person adapts, either solving the problem or running away. Many people know this as the fight or flight response. If the issue cannot be resolved, cannot be resolved satisfactorily, or is continuing for a prolonged and unmanageable amount of time, the person becomes fatigued and exhausted and no longer functions well.



When a person is under stress, their:

- heart rate increases
- breathing becomes rapid
- pupils dilate
- muscles tense
- blood pressure increases

When a person is relieved of their stress everything returns to normal. When a person is under constant or uncontrolled stress, blood pressure, heart rate, and respirations all remain chronically elevated. This can lead to illnesses such as peptic ulcers, coronary artery disease, and mental fatigue.

We cannot always control the amount of stress we are under. A cancer diagnosis can keep us feeling stressed for a prolonged period of time; make us feel out of control, fearful, and sad. We can, however, control our stress response by learning to manage it and learning relaxation techniques. A reduction in stress, even for a short period of time, can help you feel more in control of your life and what is happening to you.

Techniques for Stress Reduction:

- Schedule time for yourself every day. Even 15 minutes in your favorite room with a cup of tea and a book can help induce the relaxation response.
- Quiet time is essential to your health, but others do better with friend-time or by socializing. Know what works and schedule it into your calendar.
- Mind-body activities such as yoga, tai chi, or meditation can slow your heart rate, relax your muscles, and reduce your breathing rate. Done regularly, the effects can be felt more readily and have a longer, sustaining effect on your health.
- Expend energy. A cardio class at the gym, riding your bike, or swimming laps can help you feel less anxious and sad. The increased blood flow to your brain can help you feel less flustered and make your thinking more clear.
- Cut back on your caffeine intake. This is adding stimulation to your anxiety. Green tea contains an amino acid that promotes a calming sensation. Herbal teas have similar effects.



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- De-clutter your home and work environment. The clutter is adding to your sense of loss of control and anxiety. Enlist the help of family and co-workers to clean off surfaces, file papers, and organize spaces.

A breast cancer diagnosis or the treatments that follow may serve as a particularly stressful time in your life. This is the time to pull together your emotional resources. Let friends and family members cook you meals and care for you, take on some of your chores, and listen to your fears. We have a variety of supportive resources at Dubin: massage therapists, psychologists, social workers, and a psychiatrist, who are all here to assist in your breast cancer care. Speak to someone on your health team to be connected with these services.

Managing Fatigue

Fatigue is the most common side effect of breast cancer treatment, and it is estimated that about 9 out of 10 people may experience this. Symptoms of fatigue include lack of energy, sleeping more than usual, feeling unable to do normal activities, putting less effort into appearance or self-care, feeling tired after sleeping, having difficulty concentrating, and having trouble finding words. Complementary approaches that have been found effective in reducing fatigue include: massage, acupuncture, meditation, reiki, tai chi, and yoga.

Tips for Managing Fatigue

- Exercise is an excellent treatment for fatigue, with plenty of research to support this. It's recommended that you get a minimum of four hours per week of physical activity, but when you're fatigued, set a goal of about 15 minutes of walking per day, and then gradually increase this time, as able. Other types of gentle exercise include yoga or tai chi.
- Eating too many refined carbohydrates such as white breads, pasta, white rice, and sugary desserts may sound particularly appetizing when you're fatigued, but these foods will only increase feelings of lethargy.
- Eat a diet that is rich in vegetables and contains adequate amounts of fruit, legumes, fish, nuts, seeds, and oils.
- Fatigue may occasionally be related to certain vitamin or mineral deficiencies. Ask your doctor if you should be tested for any of these, or speak with your nutritionist about which foods contain these nutrients.
- Stay away from alcohol, coffee, caffeine, and nicotine in the evening to avoid disrupting sleep patterns.
- When you have the energy to cook, make a large batch of something, and freeze the excess in small containers. When you are too tired to cook, you can quickly heat up one of these.
- Keep a consistent schedule by going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time each day, giving yourself about 8 hours of sleep in between. Early morning exercise may help to solidify your routine and provide additional energy, while strenuous exercise in the evening may keep you from falling asleep at night. Also, limit naps to 30 minutes to avoid grogginess.
- While you may not be able to keep up with your usual routine, be kind to yourself, and allow yourself to rest and recover adequately.



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Tips for better Sleep

- Do not overeat, especially after 6 pm, and eat meals at the same time every day.
- Reduce or eliminate caffeine intake, or stop caffeine intake early in the day. Caffeine can have a long lasting impact in our bodies, and can influence our ability to fall or stay asleep. Its effects may be subtle or seemingly unrelated to sleep difficulties. Chocolate contains caffeine and should be avoided in the evening.
- To avoid waking for urination, reduce your fluid intake after 5 pm, focusing on meeting your hydration needs earlier in the day.
- Get aerobic exercise early in the day and limit vigorous exercise in the evening. Body temperature plays a role in sleep, with cool temperatures promoting sleep and heat promoting waking. As exercise raises the body's temperature, it may be difficult to fall asleep afterward.
- Attempt to get 15–30 minutes of morning sun exposure.
- Avoid napping, which may interfere with your sleep cycle.
- Dim lights and avoid “screens” in your area at least one hour before bed. Exposure to lights can reduce the production of melatonin, which is a hormone that promotes sleep.
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.
- Reduce noise and stimulating activity at least one hour before bed.
- Develop routine bedtime practices.
- Cool the temperature of your environment at least one hour before bed. 65 degrees is thought to be the optimal temperature for sleep.
- Consume herbal teas in the evening (chamomile, lemon balm, valerian, etc.).
- Do not lie in bed after night waking.
- Keys to an ideal sleep environment include: complete darkness, relaxing pillow, cool temperature, controlled noise, no computer or TV, and hidden or removed clocks.
- The bedroom should be for sleep or intimacy only. Do not read, work, or watch TV in bed.





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Summary

People who are successful in making changes understand some basic concepts. Find out what motivates you and use that to maintain your focus. Some people track their progress in a journal and others reward themselves at specific milestones such as being able to swim 10 laps or losing 5 pounds. Change is a process that takes time. If you can stick to a new routine for 30 days, research has shown that your likelihood of continuing with that behavior is strong. Start slowly and don't overwhelm yourself. Don't be hard on yourself if you are not successful. Simply recommit to your goal and start again. Pick something easy to begin with so that you are successful right away. Choose something you have always wanted to do.

Take advantage of the Dubin Breast Center resources and use this opportunity to do something really good for yourself.