

CREATING HEALTHY HABITS FOR BETTER LIVING

A Toolkit for Patients



CREATED WITH YOU IN MIND

We see you. We hear you. We've got you covered.

Living a healthy lifestyle is vital to your health and can create the best body for you. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help you to improve your health outcomes, reduce side effects, improve your mental health, and allow you to feel your best.

Living a healthy lifestyle doesn't have to be expensive. While there are systematic barriers like food deserts and the high cost of organic foods that can make it difficult to access healthier alternatives, there are some simple, cost effective, and time sensitive options out there for our ever-changing schedules and lives. Let's debunk the myth that we have to pay a lot of money, and simplify what it means to live a healthy lifestyle and explore methods to expand our healthy lifestyle beyond what we eat.





PATIENT CONSIDERATIONS:

What does a healthy lifestyle mean?

DIET

Food

Being mindful of what we eat, when we eat, and during what circumstances we eat is important. Food does more than just satisfy a craving - it fuels our body. A healthy diet should be balanced. Consult with your doctor or a nutritionist about what foods you should eat and those to avoid, the best times to eat, and fluctuations in diet due to treatment.

Whenever possible, look for healthy alternatives when eating out. Many fast-food restaurants now have healthier alternatives and are more transparent with nutritional facts. Fastfoodnutrition.org is a great tool to help you check nutritional facts for some of the most popular restaurants.

Deciphering and understanding nutrition labels can be challenging. The University of Texas's MD Anderson Cancer Center offers a helpful tool to help read and understand nutritional facts¹:

How to read a nutrition label

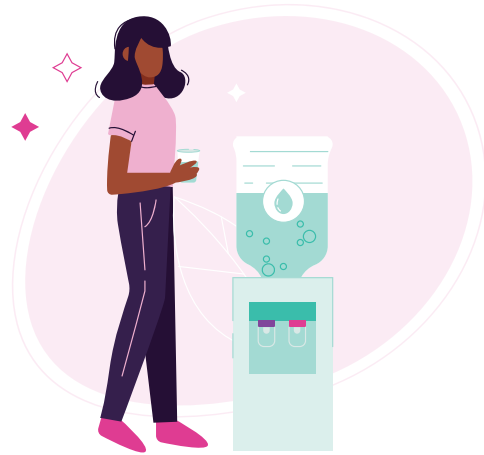
- 1 Check the serving size**
 It's not always the whole package.
- 2 Check the calories**
 Too many **calories** can lead to weight gain.
- 3 Limit these**
 Watch out for foods with more than 20% **fat**.
 Don't eat more than 2,400 milligrams of **sodium** a day.
 Make sure **carbs** make up 45-65% of your daily calories.
 Limit your **sugar** to 25 grams a day or less.
- 4 Get enough of these**
 Look for foods that have at least 3 grams of **fiber**.
 Eat plant-based **protein**, like soy, beans, peas and lentils.
 Get your **vitamins** from food instead of supplements.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30 mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g



Drinks

Staying hydrated is critical, but be cognizant of what you are drinking. Water is essential and your recommended intake is dependent on you and your lifestyle. Try to stay away from sugary drinks as sugar feeds cancer. Additionally, [Cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov) suggests that we should be wary of alcohol consumption because as alcohol consumption increases, so does risk of cancer.



Exercise

Proper exercise is important and can help to improve health outcomes. And research even suggests that exercise can reduce the risk of breast cancer returning. There are different types of exercise and it is best to find what works well for you and compliments your treatment. It is important to be real in setting appropriate expectations for exercise, to know your limits, and evaluate where your current fitness level is. Talk to your doctor and specialist about the exercise that may be best for you.

According to the National Cancer Institute, exercise can:

- Improve sleep
- Strengthen Immune system
- Boost Mental Health
- Reduce Fatigue
- Lose weight
- Decrease pain



An exercise plan does not have to be complicated. Simple activities such as walking can be a great source of exercise. Make it a part of your daily plan. You can choose to do it on a treadmill, take the dog for a walk or stroll to the park with kids. Consider your daily errands and if walking might be possible to complete them. Every step counts toward a healthier you.

Something else to keep in mind is that more exercise is not the only factor in weight gain or loss. For example if you are taking anti-estrogens as part of your treatment, it does target weight gain. Weight gain can be a cause of cancer which is why daily exercise is important.



Alternate Therapies

Alternative therapies like acupuncture may help to reduce side effects due to treatment. It is worth exploring with your doctor to understand if it is worth potentially incorporating into your wellness activities. Research and explore therapies such as:

- Acupuncture
- Massage
- Reflexology
- Meditation
- Chiropractic therapy
- Yoga
- Guided Imagery



These therapies may help with joint pain, nausea, headaches, backpain, and can even assist with relaxation which is great for your mental health.

Access

Ensure that you have access to healthy foods. This can take many forms including food delivery services, and local farmers markets. Look for affordable nutrient rich foods and as mentioned before, explore healthier options at places in your area. Many cities have programs available to their residents that provide more economical choices for healthy foods. If you are in need of food assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to local and state-based programs that help with food assistance. Many state-based food aid now comes in the form of a debit card, making assistance anonymous when purchasing at the grocery store. Food banks and local area charities such as Salvation Army, also provide their residents with healthy food without having to provide cumbersome documentation. It can be difficult to ask for assistance, but appropriate nutrition during cancer treatment is vital and assistance is available.





Sleep

Sleep is not only vital for living but also great for our moods. Research suggests that most people need 7-9 hours of sleep each night. You may notice that with treatment your sleep patterns may change. Many people find themselves awake in the middle of the night due to treatment side effects or anxiety due to diagnosis and treatment. This is normal and there are things you can do to help protect and preserve your sleep. Resist the urge to pick up your phone when waking in the middle of the night, keep the room dark and cool and consider practicing guided imagery or meditation to help get to sleep. If you have increased difficulty, Cancer.org recommends keeping a sleep log and tracking how your sleeping patterns may be changing. Bring this log with you to your next doctor's visit and ask for tips on how to improve sleep and potential causes of any potential disturbances.

Emotional Wellness

Self-care is important and a vital part of emotional well-being. Self-care includes doing activities that spark joy in your life. It can be reading a book, spending time with family and friends, tending to a garden, playing with your pet, or going on a walk. The idea is to find joy. In addition to helping elevate your mood, self-care can lower your heart rate, offer a break from stress and increase positive thoughts and generate soothing feelings.

Another choice for self-care is to get a therapist to navigate life. Therapy is often stigmatized in the Black community, but can produce amazing outcomes. Therapy can prevent and/or combat depression. This includes keeping finances in order too.

Toxic Free lifestyle

Be conscious about all things that are applied to your skin. Statistics state that 60% of what you place on your skin is absorbed into your bloodstream. Paying attention to the products that you use is highly recommended. Below is a list of everyday items some people choose to give further consideration:

- Lotion
- Lip balm
- Dish soap
- Deodorant
- Makeup
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Laundry Detergent
- Sunscreen
- Hair dye
- Hair products/processing
- Cell phones
- Perfume/Fragrance
- Contraception
- Cigarette smoke





As part of our beauty routine, Black women are often chemically processing and/or dyeing their hair. While this may help us achieve the look we want, it is not always the best for us. Anything that we apply on our skin or scalp may cause irritation, seep into our skin and ultimately into our bloodstream. Some of these harmful chemicals may cause cancer.

The “Think Dirty” app is a helpful tool that rates how harmful a product is simply by scanning the barcode.



Sexual Health & Intimacy

Sexual health concerns may arise during treatment. Getting ahead of it and knowing what to expect and how to respond is important. You may experience vaginal dryness or a decrease in sexual desire. According to Dana Farber Cancer Institute, women that have undergone a mastectomy may feel less aroused and more disassociated with their breasts. The goal is to find other parts of the body where you can still experience sensation. Have an open and honest talk with your partner about your needs.

You may also experience dryness from hormonal therapy or even experience an early menopause. In both scenarios explore the usage of lubricants and vaginal moisturizers.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT WELLNESS

- What exercises do you recommend for me?
- Are there any forms of exercise I should stay away from?
- How many days a week do you recommend I exercise?
- What should my diet consist of?
- Are there any foods I should avoid?
- How many times a day should I be eating?
- What should my water intake look like?
- Can you provide an example of a healthy diet for me?
- How many hours should I be sleeping?
- What do you recommend if I encounter insomnia?
- Will my treatment impact my sleep?
- Will my treatment impact my ability to exercise?
- Will my treatment impact my appetite?
- Healthy foods are expensive, any advice?
- What are signs of overeating?
- What are signs of undereating?
- What are signs of too much exercise?
- What are signs of too little exercise?
- Any harmful side effects to exercise during treatment?
- Do you have a nutritionist or dietician that you can recommend?
- Is a nutritionist or dietician covered by my insurance?
- Do you have a trainer or health expert that you recommend?
- How will treatment affect my sexual health?
- How can I combat any unwanted changes to my sexual health?
- What do you recommend I use for vaginal dryness?
- Do you have mental health resources I can access?
- Are your mental health professionals covered by my insurance?
- What are your emotional health recommendations for me?
- How have you seen treatment affect mental health in patients?
- Are there any chemicals in products I use daily that I should look out for?
- Can I drink a limited amount of alcohol? What type?
- Can I take supplements?
- Can I use CBD oil for pain?
- Is it ok to use cannabis?
- What type of complementary or alternative medicine do you recommend?





TIPS AT A GLANCE

Consult your doctor. With any lifestyle changes, consult with your doctor first. Get their advice and expertise to understand how any changes may affect you and your treatment.

Consult a dietitian. A registered dietitian can work with you to ensure that you are consuming the right amount of nutrients. They'll work with you to create a nutrient rich diet that will help your overall health.

Listen to your body. Don't push yourself beyond doctor recommendations. Listen to your body and trust your instincts.

Clean Beauty. Think about eliminating your toxic beauty routine and swap it in for a cleaner alternative.

Supplements. Consult with your doctor on their thoughts regarding your use of supplements. Supplements have not been evaluated by the FDA so there is no sure way of knowing what is in these products.

Fresh Air. Walking is a great form of exercise. Walking in nearby parks if available is beneficial. If no parks are available, any open space including sidewalks are great.

Clean Household. Go through and eliminate household products that may be toxic such as dish soap, hand soap, laundry detergent, dishwashing detergent, etc.

Toss the Perfume. Fragrance is a cause of cancer. Think about swapping out your chemical filled perfumes with an essential oil. Be sure to consult with your physician before doing so to ensure that the oils you want to use don't counteract with treatment.

Habit Stacking. When it comes to exercise, think about incorporating movement into the things you already love, or things you need to do. For example, if you need to go to the pharmacy and it is nearby, try walking or biking instead of driving or taking public transportation.



At Tigerlily we are committed to providing you with the most up to date information along with resources to help you on your journey. We know that this is a challenging time and we want to provide you with resources not only Tigerlily offers, but also our partners. Check out our Toolkit page to find additional resources available to you.

1. <https://www.mdanderson.org/content/dam/mdanderson/documents/publications/focused-on-health/read-nutrition-label.pdf>

