

Brain CARE in Focus

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Welcome to the spring edition of
Brain CARE in Focus
from the
Macmillan Brain CARE Team

Living Well with a Brain Tumour

In our Newsletters we hope to provide useful information with healthy tips and links to useful websites, to assist patients, carers and colleagues to live and work well with cancer. If you are living with cancer or having cancer treatment you may not be able to eat and drink what you are used to, or as much. Our first bulletin focusses on healthy eating, nutrition and the possible relationship between what we eat and cancer.

News from the Brain CARE Team

Our team has been up and running since September 2018. In this time we have supported 60 people in Hertfordshire, who are living with brain tumours, to access the excellent range of services available. Our referrals have ranged from community physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy, through to living well services at the excellent hospices in Hertfordshire, benefits advice services and support for carers. Our aim is to ensure you and your family feel supported and informed about how you can live as well as possible with your brain tumour.

We have developed a service directory. The directory covers many different services and charities that are providing support for people with brain tumours in Hertfordshire. Please let us know if you would like a copy.

If you want to see what else is going on in the brain tumour and Hertfordshire communities, follow us on twitter [@hctbraincare](https://twitter.com/hctbraincare)

Don't forget we are here to help you, so give us a call if you have anything you want to discuss.

Alison, Lesley and Lucy – The Macmillan Brain CARE Team

Useful information and support

[Macmillan Brain CARE
Team](#)



We are a team of specialist therapists (Allied Health Professionals) working in Hertfordshire. We support the rehabilitation needs of people living with brain cancer.

[Macmillan Cancer
Support:](#)

Macmillan is here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

[brainstrust:](#)

Provide help and support for people living with a brain tumour.

[The Brain Tumour
Charity:](#)

Offer an inclusive information and support service for everyone affected by a brain tumour.

Healthy Eating & Cancer:



‘Healthy eating is important, especially when related to cancer.

Healthier diets could help prevent 1 in 10 cancers (10%) in the UK. Research is being done into which types of food may affect our risk of developing cancer. ‘

‘How our diet affects the risk of developing cancer is complicated, however research suggests that eating fruit and vegetables may reduce the risk of certain cancers as they are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre, and usually low in fat. Most of us do not eat enough fruit and vegetables which should make up about a third of the food we eat every day.’

* **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Fortunately, ‘eating healthily isn’t about avoiding foods, it is important to include nourishing foods to provide energy and with anti-cancer properties. Some of these properties include antioxidants and micronutrients. Antioxidants are chemicals which oppose free radicals (compounds which react uncontrollably with oxygen) by stabilising the cells. Micronutrient density has to do with the amount of vitamins and minerals within the foods. Each vitamin and mineral plays an integral role in the healthy functioning of various body tissues. Important cancer micro-nutrients include calcium, zinc, vitamin A, vitamin K2, vitamin D, vitamin C and the B vitamins ‘

** **National Foundation for Cancer Research**

Another important consideration in eating for cancer prevention is energy balance.

The best condition for our physical health is one where we are only consuming the calories we need to function well! This is helpful because it can reduce the burden of digestion, detoxification and unnecessary hormonal influence. If we don’t need the energy, why stress our bodies out more by consuming it. It just forces our bodies to adjust and find a place to store the excess! In addition the metabolic stress of carrying extra weight can significantly influence our overall health!

** **National Foundation for Cancer Research.**

See full article:

<https://www.nfcr.org/blog/cancer-fighting-lifestyle/cancer-prevention-diet/>

Useful information and support

Macmillan:

- [Healthy Eating](#)
- [Macmillan Recipes for people with cancer](#)
- [Common Questions about Diet and Cancer](#)
- [Online Community](#)

National Foundation for Cancer Research

- [Antioxidants: Body Balance](#)
- [Simple Strategies to boost your health](#)

Carers UK:

- [Eating well and cancer](#)
- [Nutrition resources for carers and the person they care for](#)

World Cancer Research Fund:

- [Recipes and ideas to help you enjoy nutritious food](#)

As well as making healthy choices when choosing or cooking food, you may wish to consider the tips below:

- Change your habits.
- Start the day with a healthy breakfast.
- Eat at the table rather than in front of the tv.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids, drink 16 fluid ozs (470 ml) of water before eating.
- Shop smart—healthy eating starts at the supermarket. Stock your kitchen with a variety of healthy foods that you can mix and match to prepare nutritious meals and snacks.
- Use a food and activity planner - writing down your meals each week can help you plan in advance and is a good way to keep track of how you are doing!
- Cut down portion sizes—use a smaller dinner plate.
- Get your greens and use healthy cooking oils.
- Eat wild salmon, tuna or mackerel which are full of omega-3 oils and great for cellular health.
- Enjoy a few nuts— walnuts and almonds are a great source of protein.
- Fibre is good— choose whole grains, beans, barley and lentils. Dried figs, dried cranberries and dried apricots are great sources of fibre.
- Be aware of sugar intake and high-fat dessert choices.
- Moderate alcohol consumption.
- To make eating and drinking easier make sure you sit upright when eating; take small sips of drinks and small bites of food; cook food so it is soft and add a sauce or gravy to keep it moist; don't talk when eating; make sure you keep your mouth really clean and comfortable.
- Tell your family and friends what you are doing so they can support you.
- Finally and importantly—eat slowly and **enjoy time with family and friends!** Eating slowly gives your body time to realise it is full.

Snacking—Looking at the whole picture:

'Some people include snacks in their diet and others don't. Scientists have suggested it may be due to many factors, such as feelings of hunger, the environment (what foods are easily available), social culture (what friends and family do) and how much they eat during mealtimes.

Useful information and support

British Dietetic Association (BDA):

Information on food and nutrition, diet and medical conditions, and reliable facts on the latest food and health issues.

- [Fruit & Vegetables—How to get 5-a-day](#)
- [Plant-based diets](#)
- [Healthy Snacks](#)
- [Portion Sizes](#)

[Change4Life:](#)

Public health programme run by the Department of Health aiming to help improve public's diet and lifestyle.

[Diabetes UK:](#)

British based charity supporting people with, and at risk, of diabetes.

[Food Standards Agency:](#)

An independent Government department working across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in food. We make sure that food is safe and what it says it is.

If you do include snacks in your diet, they can make a useful contribution to your energy and nutrition needs, providing essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals, protein and fibre. The key is to choose healthy snacks (those which are lower in saturated fat, salt and/or sugar and a good source of vitamins minerals and fibre) and to watch those portion sizes. For example, snacking can be used to help increase your fruit and vegetable intake or incorporate some nuts into your diet.

Thinking about how your snacks fit in with your whole diet across the day or even the week can help you to make sure your energy intake (the total amount of calories you have) is not too high and that the variety of foods and drinks you have are healthy and balanced.' It's all positive!

Healthy Snacking—The British Nutrition Foundation

HCT's Nutrition & Dietetics Service comprises of a team of healthcare professionals including Dietitians, Dietetic Practice Assistants and Administrative Staff. Their registered Dietitians are qualified health professionals that assess, diagnose and treat diet and nutrition problems on an individual and via a wider group approach.

Their Dietitians use the most up-to-date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, and translate this into practical guidance to enable people across Hertfordshire to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices.

If you have a poor appetite, are losing weight or are underweight you might be referred to the Dietitian who will provide dietary advice to address this. Dietitians also provide advice to patients who have a feeding tube (enteral nutrition) or intravenously (parenteral nutrition).

A Hard Pill to Swallow?

Difficulty swallowing food, drinks and tablets is called dysphagia and can be experienced by people living with a brain tumour. Watch out for signs such as coughing when having a drink or a meal; food getting stuck in the mouth or throat; difficulties biting or chewing; dribbling saliva.

If you are experiencing any difficulties a speech and language therapist can help by providing advice on foods that are easier to swallow and strategies to help eating and drinking be comfortable.

Useful information and support

The British Nutrition Foundation

Provides healthy eating information, resources for schools, news items, recipes and details of work undertaken around the UK.

- [Healthy Living](#)
- [Nutrition in the news](#)
- [Nutrition Science](#)
- [Online Training](#)
- [Healthy Hydration Guide](#)
- [Energy Density—part 1](#)
- [Energy Density—part 2](#)

5 Tips to make eating and drinking easier

1. Make sure you sit upright when eating.
2. Take small sips of drinks and small bites of food.
3. Cook food so it is soft and add a sauce or gravy to keep it moist.
4. Don't talk when eating.
5. Make sure you keep your mouth really clean and comfortable.

How to get help

Referrals to the Nutrition & Dietetics and Speech and Language Services can be made via the GP. Alternatively any concerns around food and nutrition and/or speech and language can be discussed with the Macmillan Brain CARE Team who can arrange a referral for you.

Further information on **HCT's Nutrition & Dietetics Service and Speech and Language Therapy Service**, as well as clinic locations are available on the [HCT website](#)

Useful information and support

The Macmillan Brain CARE Team welcomes your involvement. If you would like to share your experience of living with a brain tumour and help shape the service we offer, please get in touch:

Contact the Macmillan Brain CARE Team

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Let us know what you think!

Would you like to see the team produce further newsletters with information and advice on brain tumours and living well?

[YES](#)

[NO](#)