

Guide to navigating...

Radiation

What is radiation?

Radiation (also known as radiotherapy) is used to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. This is done using intense energy beams that aim directly at the cancer cells and destroy the DNA. Sometimes radiation is used after surgery to help kill any cancer cells that remain and may even stop the cancer from returning.

What are some common nutrition-related side effects?

- Fatigue, tiredness or weakness
- Lack of appetite
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

How can I prepare for radiation?

- Maintain adequate hydration leading up to and during radiation, aiming for at least 6 to 8 cups of water per day. Opt for water or other unsweetened beverages when achieving your hydration goals to promote skin integrity and wound healing.
- Prepare meals and snacks in advance in case you are too fatigued or not feeling well enough to cook:
 - Make soups, stews, chili, broth, whole grain waffles, or muffins and freeze.
 - Prep ingredients to make smoothies: combine dry ingredients in a seal-tight container, freeze frozen fruits and vegetables in freezer-safe containers. When you are ready to make your smoothie, simply combine the ingredients and add a liquid such as milk or a plant-based milk to a blender.
 - Have easy-to-grab snacks on hand: trail mix, chopped vegetables, pieces of fruits, etc.

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How can I support myself nutritionally during radiation?

- Maintaining proper nutrition during radiation may decrease side effects and will support your immune system. Fill your plate with plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, whole grains, herbs and spices.
- Aim to include protein with every meal and snack as this nutrient is essential for growth and development of new cells. Protein sources include lean meats, fish, low-fat dairy, poultry, seafood, and eggs. And don't forget plant proteins such as beans, nuts, and seeds!
- Choose foods that are light and easy to digest if you do not have an appetite:
 - Toast with nut butter or avocado
 - Higher fat yogurt mixed with fruit, nuts and/or seeds
 - Eggs
 - Oatmeal with a drizzle of honey or maple syrup
- Avoid fried, fatty, and highly seasoned spicy foods, which tend to upset the stomach.
- Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day instead of 3 large meals to maintain energy levels. Eat your biggest meal when your appetite is its best.
- Engaging in regular physical activity (walking, yoga, Pilates, stretching) can not only improve fatigue, but also support you mentally and physically.

For more information on nutrition and management of treatment-related side effects, visit our all-access [Nutrition Hub](#), and view our [Side Effect Guide](#).