

EAT HEALTHY, LIVE BETTER

A guide for those with pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer



The National Pancreas Foundation provides hope for those suffering from pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer through funding cutting-edge research, advocating for new and better therapies, and providing support and education for patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. Visit our website at www.pancreasfoundation.org for additional information and volunteer opportunities.

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<https://pancreasfoundation.org/patient-information/nutrition-advice-recipes>



SEEKING SUPPORT FROM OTHERS

Coping with pancreatic disease and making lifestyle changes can be difficult at times. It can sometimes give rise to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and hopelessness. But you don't have to do it alone. There is an entire pancreas warrior community behind you.

If you're feeling down, reach out to family and friends. Sometimes, simply picking up the phone and calling someone can make a big difference in your day.

In addition, joining a patient support group lets you connect with others who share similar experiences and challenges. The National Pancreas Foundation offers:

- An online Pancreatitis Support Community. Learn more at www.pancreasfoundation.org/pancreas-community.
- In-person support groups run by some state chapters. Find your local chapter at www.pancreasfoundation.org/state-chapters.

If your feelings become overwhelming or start interfering with your daily life, reach out to your healthcare provider or a mental health professional.

FINDING TREATMENT

The National Pancreas Foundation Centers are at premier healthcare facilities that focus on multidisciplinary treatment of pancreas disease, treating the "whole patient" with a focus on the best possible outcomes and an improved quality of life. Learn more at pancreasfoundation.org/npf-centers-info.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you're concerned about pancreatitis or pancreatic cancer, keep these points in mind:

- Aim for a low-fat diet rich in fruits and veggies, whole grains, and healthy sources of protein and fat.
- Work with your healthcare provider to address dietary triggers for pain or other symptoms.
- Make addressing self-care and overall wellness an essential part of your plan.

In addition to being the best approach when you have pancreatic disease, the advice here is great for your whole family. If you have children, teach them to make smart food and lifestyle choices and start them down the road to a long, healthy life.



MAKING OVERALL WELLNESS A PRIORITY

A balanced, nutritious diet is highly important. But other things also affect your well-being and quality of life. For the best results, a proper diet needs to be combined with an overall healthy lifestyle and good medical care.

Get Enough Exercise and Sleep

Exercise and sleep are vital for your well-being. However, pain can sometimes get in the way of staying active and sleeping well. Other possible obstacles include coexisting health conditions, physical limitations, and fatigue. When you hit a roadblock, small but targeted actions can often help you get around it.

To ease into physical activity, begin by trying:

- Short walks
- Chair routines
- Virtual classes
- Stretching

To promote better sleep, ask your healthcare provider about:

- Sleep aids or melatonin
- Lifestyle changes
- Pain medications
- Medical marijuana

Try Other Wellness Approaches

Various other activities and practices may also be part of a well-rounded wellness regimen. Here are a few you might want to consider:

- Essential oils
- Journaling
- Massage
- Meditation
- Spiritual beliefs and prayer
- Supplements
- Support groups
- Yoga

While these practices may prove helpful, they are not intended to replace medical advice. Nor do they work for everyone. They are merely suggestions based on what others have found helpful.



EATING HEALTHY WHEN DINING OUT

When most people eat at restaurants, they tend to consume more saturated fat and calories, fewer nutrients, and less fiber than when they eat at home. But you can avoid that mistake. Here are some simple ways to stay on track while dining out.

- **Watch your portion sizes.** Share a large entrée. Or order the appetizer size of a dish and pair it with a salad.
- **Choose whole-grain bread.** Select the whole-grain option in a bread basket. Order sandwiches made on whole-grain bread or wraps.
- **Include leafy greens and vegetables.** Try to make them a big part of every meal. Instead of fries or chips on the side, order steamed vegetables or a mixed green salad.
- **Ask for salad dressing on the side.** The same goes for sauces, gravy, cheese, and toppings. That way, you control how much you use.
- **Don't be afraid to make special requests.** Many restaurant chefs are happy to oblige. For example, you might ask that little or no butter be used when cooking your meal.

Your Menu of Options

✓ Order This	✗ Not That
COOKING METHOD	
Baked, broiled, steamed, garden fresh, au jus, roasted, poached	Sautéed, cheese sauce, au gratin, buttered, au beurre, Alfredo sauce, cream sauce, fried, candied, glazed, béarnaise sauce, hollandaise
CONDIMENTS	
Mustard, lemon juice, chutney, salsa, cocktail sauce, ketchup (in moderation), vinegar, horseradish, soy sauce (warning: it's high in sodium)	Butter, clarified butter, margarine, cheese, bacon bits, salad dressing, cream, sour cream, whipped cream, pesto

NUTRITION AND PANCREAS DISEASE

Getting the nutrition your body needs can be challenging when you have pancreatic disease. There may be times when it's difficult to eat at all. Even when you are feeling well, you may need to be careful about the foods you choose.

Fortunately, there are things you can do to manage these challenges. A proper diet can improve your overall well-being and quality of life.

Keep in mind that each person is different. Your healthcare provider is the best source of advice about your specific situation.

WHAT YOUR PANCREAS DOES

The pancreas has two main functions:

- **Exocrine function**—Creating digestive enzymes that break down protein and fat
- **Endocrine function**—Making hormones, such as insulin, that regulate blood sugar levels

In some people, the pancreas loses its ability to perform one or both functions. This may be due to scarring, a disorder that causes destruction of the pancreas, or surgery that removes part or all of the pancreas.

If digestive enzyme activity is reduced, food may not be digested well. This can lead to poor absorption of nutrients. If the pancreas cannot make enough insulin, blood sugar levels may stay high. This can result in diabetes.



EATING WISELY WITH PANCREATITIS

When you have pancreatitis, what you eat may affect your symptoms. Understanding the connection can help you better manage your condition.

Limit Your Fat Intake

Eating high-fat foods can sometimes trigger bouts of pancreatitis pain. For this reason, most experts on pancreatic disease stress the importance of maintaining a low-fat diet.

Many people with chronic pancreatitis should restrict the amount of fat they eat to no more than 50 grams per day. Others may need to stay between 30 and 50 grams. This limit is affected by your height, weight, and personal tolerance. If you have chronic pancreatitis, ask your healthcare provider what's right for you.

LOW-FAT DIET TIPS

- ✓ Limit foods high in fat, such as oils, butter, cheese, cream, and lard.
- ✓ Spread your fat intake throughout the day. Don't concentrate it in one meal.
- ✓ Bake, grill, roast, or steam foods. Avoid frying and stir-frying.
- ✓ Choose foods labeled "low fat," "nonfat," "fat free," and "light."
- ✓ Trim excess fat from meats before cooking.
- ✓ Try cooking sprays instead of oils. Use fat-free broth.

Think Before You Drink

Dehydration can cause pancreas symptoms to flare up. Always drink plenty of fluids, aiming for at least eight glasses per day.

Good choices include coffee, tea, fruit and vegetable juices, hot chocolate, and sports drinks. Avoid sodas and beverages that contain cream. Also skip alcoholic drinks and foods prepared with alcohol.

In some cases, your provider may recommend supplementing your diet with fat-free nutrition drinks that provide extra calories and protein. Examples are Ensure Clear and Resource Breeze.



Consider How You Eat

It may be easier to manage pancreatitis when you eat several small meals per day, rather than three large meals. Occasionally, you may need to limit eating and give your pancreas a break. Your healthcare provider might even recommend no food for a day or two.

MORE TIPS

- ✓ Keep a food journal to help pinpoint the foods that trigger your symptoms.
- ✓ Partner with your healthcare team to set and work toward nutrition goals.
- ✓ Consult a nutritionist, if possible.

Avoid Nutrient Deficiencies

Pancreatitis may lead to low levels of vitamins A, B-12, C, D, E, and K, thiamine, and folic acid. It may also lead to low levels of minerals, including zinc, copper, and selenium. Taking a daily multivitamin may help you get enough nutrients. Your provider should also check your nutrient levels at least yearly to identify and treat deficiencies if needed.

Replace Pancreatic Enzymes if Needed

Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency occurs when the pancreas doesn't make enough enzymes to digest food properly. If that's the case for you, you may need pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT). This involves taking pills containing digestive enzymes to help break down food.

The enzyme capsules need to travel through the intestine with the food so that they can assist with the timely breakdown of the food and help your body absorb nutrients more easily. You'll take the first capsule of pancreatic enzymes with the first bite of each meal and then additional capsules during the meal so as to accompany the food during digestion. Exact dosing should be discussed with a pancreatic specialist.

Control Diabetes

Diabetes can result from loss of the pancreas' ability to make insulin. If you have diabetes, an eating plan can help manage your blood sugar. Seek professional guidance on making healthy food choices as soon as possible after diagnosis. Be sure to take any insulin, enzymes, or other medications as prescribed.



USING DIET TO FIGHT PANCREATIC CANCER

Study after study has shown the same thing: A daily diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains helps protect against several types of cancer, including cancer of the pancreas.

Choose a Diet Rich in Fruits and Veggies

Fruits and vegetables are great sources of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants (substances that help protect cells from certain kinds of damage). When present in large enough amounts, antioxidants play a big role in keeping your body cells healthy and functioning as they should. This lessens the chance that the cells will become cancerous.

Limit Refined Sugar, White Flour, and Saturated Fat

A diet high in refined sugar, white flour, and meats loaded with saturated fat has been linked to an increased risk for various cancers as well as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and arthritis. Get into the habit of reading food labels. To limit refined sugar and white flour, avoid foods such as white bread and sugary baked goods. To limit saturated fat, try the food suggestions below.

Avoid These Foods HIGH in Saturated Fats	Choose These Foods LOW in Saturated Fats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken, dark meat, wings, and giblets • Beef, regular cuts • Pork, loin, chops, and bacon • Butter • Full-fat cheese and cream cheese • Cream and whipped cream • Whole milk • Corn and cottonseed oils • Egg yolks and whole eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken, white meat (without the skin) • Most fish and seafood • Very lean beef and pork • Nuts and seeds • Low-fat cheese and cream cheese • Nonfat or low-fat yogurt • Low-fat and skim milk • Olive, canola, peanut, and safflower oils • Egg whites



Foods to Fight Pancreatic Cancer

There's no single nutrient that can make you healthy. And there's no single food that will keep you from getting cancer. However, research has shown that eating certain foods as part of an overall healthy diet may lower the risk for pancreatic cancer.

Choose These Foods ...	For These Health-Promoting Components
Whole wheat, rye, barley, couscous, oats, bulgur, buckwheat, kasha, millet, popcorn, and other whole grains	Fiber, lignans, selenium, B vitamins
*Watermelon, red grapefruit, pink guava, papaya, tomatoes, tomato products (such as spaghetti sauce)	Lycopene, beta-carotene
*Peas and beans (known collectively as legumes)	Fiber, saponins, lignans, protease inhibitors, vitamins A and C, folate
*Lettuce, spinach, kale, Swiss chard, arugula, watercress, mustard greens, escarole, endive, collards, and other leafy greens	Folate
Red and purple grapes, berries, pomegranates	Resveratrol, anthocyanins, ellagic acid, myricetin, quercetin, kaempferol, folate, vitamin C
Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, brussels sprouts, bok choy	Isothiocyanates, quercetin, vitamin C, kaempferol

* These foods are particularly high in nutrients that may help prevent pancreatic cancer.