



Lucile Packard  
Children's Hospital  
**Stanford**

Bass Center for Childhood Cancer  
and Blood Diseases



*Giselle, former cancer patient and current healthy kid*

# Nutrition and Wellness Guide

for children with cancer and their families

Not for Transplant Patients

[basscenter.stanfordchildrens.org](http://basscenter.stanfordchildrens.org)

Developed in partnership with Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services. Check with your hematologist or oncologist to better understand your child's nutrition and care needs.

## 5 Strategies and Tips

To support you and your family

1. Manage stress
2. Keep your child hydrated
3. Strengthen your child's digestion
4. Serve nourishing foods
5. Manage your child's weight



### 1. Manage stress

Cancer is stressful. Remember, your child will notice your stress, so take care of yourself as you take care of your child.

- Identify strategies that help you cope with stress, and schedule time to put your strategies into practice.
- Make sure you and your child are getting enough sleep. We heal during sleep both emotionally and physically.
- Spend time doing things you enjoy like sharing healthy meals or going for walks with your family and friends.
- Breathe deeply. Find time to stretch and move. Try a little yoga, meditation or guided imagery.
- Remember to laugh. Rent funny movies, share funny stories with your family and friends.
- Listen to music and soft sounds to lift your spirits and ease stress.
- Use essential oils. They can help promote energy, sleep and calm the mind.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help with meal planning, shopping, and cooking.

### 2. Keep your child hydrated

Treatments work better and side effects are more easily managed when your child is well hydrated.

- Have your child sip on liquids with meals and drink liquids in-between meals.

*Giselle (cover photo) and her mother Gabi utilized these five strategies and tips while undergoing treatment at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford. Giselle finished her treatment in 2016 and continues to lead a healthy lifestyle.*

*Photo by Tanja Lippert*

- Your child should drink plenty of fluids every day. Have your child take a sip of water every hour. It helps to carry a water bottle.
- Add slices of lemon or cucumbers to your child's water to add flavor.
- On your child's chemo days, bring coconut water, broth, or soup in a thermos for light nutrition and hydration.
- Have your child drink herbal teas: mint (soothing) or chamomile (calming).

### 3. Strengthen your child's digestion

It's important to keep digestion and gastrointestinal health strong, as 70% of the immune system is in the gut.

- Show your child how to chew their food well and how to eat slowly and mindfully.
- Encourage your child to eat fermented foods like sauerkraut, kim chi, kombucha, beet kvass and cultured pasteurized yogurts and kefir.
- Have your child eat whole foods with high amounts of fiber, such as sprouted grains, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid sodas or soda-like beverages as they may create digestive problems for your child during to treatment.
- Calm inflammation by adding natural, anti-inflammatory spices to your child's meals and smoothies, like ginger, turmeric, black pepper, leafy greens, blueberries, broccoli, beets, bok choy and celery.
- Add fiber-rich chia seeds into your child's meals. Chia can curb your child's appetite during steroid days.

### 4. Serve nourishing food

Empower your child during treatment by serving nourishing foods that strengthen the body. Make smart food choices.

- Have nourishing foods handy, like fresh veggies, whole grain bread, crackers, canned or frozen soups, oatmeal, peanut or almond butter, bananas and other healthy fruit.
- Make big batches of soups and stews to freeze and use later.
- Include protein in meals – eggs, meat, fish, dairy, nuts, seeds, and nut butters.
- A protein smoothie makes a great meal. Have smoothie ingredients on hand, such as frozen berries, bananas, greens, yogurt, and protein-rich nuts, nut butters and nut milks.
- Your child should eat the rainbow every day—every color of veggies and fruit. There is no limit—each day your child can eat as many fruits and vegetables as they can manage. Encourage your child to eat 2-4 servings of fruit the size of a baseball and 3-7 servings\* of vegetables.  
*\* One serving of vegetables is approximately ½ cup.*
- On chemo days, your child should eat foods that taste good.
- If chemo affects your child during or soon after infusions, try a lighter meal before your appointment.
- Serve your child anti-inflammatory foods like tomatoes, olive oil, green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale and collards), nuts (almonds, walnuts, and pecans), fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines and tuna), fruit (berries, cherries, apples, kiwifruit and oranges).

- Avoid serving inflammatory foods, such as refined carbohydrates (white bread and pastries), fried foods, sugar and high fructose corn syrup, sweetened beverages (soda), processed meats, conventional red meat, margarine, shortening and lard.

## 5. Manage your child's weight

Maintaining normal weight can be difficult during cancer treatment. Being underweight or continuously losing weight is a concern. Too little fat and muscle mass can impede healing and your child's ability to repair and rebuild.

- Share regular meals with your child at regular times — three square meals or six mini meals.
- Serve pastured (grass fed) meat, cold water fish, and good fats (nuts, nut butter, avocados and organic butter).
- Bring healthy snacks and drinks to treatment in a small cooler.
- Build resilience. When possible, help your child get exercise. Start with a little movement each day.
- Limit added sugar, juices and processed foods in your child's diet.
- Avoid giving fruit juice to your child. Fruit juices can be high in calories. If you offer fruit juice, dilute it with water.



Gabriel completed treatment for leukemia in 2016 and is living a healthy and happy life.

# Superhero Foods

**Veggies, every color**

**Cruciferous veggies**

Arugula, bok choy, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens, kale, mustard greens, radish, turnip and watercress

**Avocados**

**Whole grains**

Quinoa, brown rice, freekeh, steel cut oats and bulgur wheat

**Legumes**

Beans, peas, lentils and peanuts

**Fruit, every color**

**Fermented foods\***

Yogurt, kefir, pasteurized kombucha, sauerkraut, kimchi, tempeh and pickles

**Pasteurized yogurt and kefir**

**Spices**

**Nuts and seeds**

**Cold water fish**

Salmon, sardines, anchovies, cod, snapper and trout

**Eggs\*\***

**Poultry, beef, bison, lamb\*\***

**Booster foods**

Beef collagen powder, ground flax seeds, hulled hemp seeds, spirulina, bee pollen, wheat germ, chia seeds and royal jelly

**Beverages\*\*\***

Water, coconut, water, green tea, milk, herb teas, broth and bone broth

**Olives and olive oil**

**Black cumin seeds and oil**



**Check with your oncologist or hematologist about specific nutrition needs and unusual food choices.**

\* Salt content can be high in fermented foods.

\*\* Whenever possible choose or consider pasture-raised, grass-fed, free-range and organic proteins.

\*\*\* Avoid serving your child grapefruit or grapefruit juice during treatment.

# Nutrition and Wellness Basics

## Where to start

- Keep it simple
- Do the best you can
- Relax and take a deep breath
- Serve three square meals or six mini meals
- Encourage your child to eat small portions if their appetite is weak or weight loss is a goal
- Prepare a shopping list for a three-day meal plan
- Keep superhero foods on hand
- Ask for and accept help

## Follow an eating and living plan that meets your individual needs

Cancer treatments vary with each individual and may influence taste, appetite and nutritional needs. Contact your oncologist to develop an individual nutrition plan.

## Nutrition is not a cure

Nutrition is a tool to support and strengthen your child's body. This information should be used as a guide — nutrition and wellness alone will not cure cancer.

## Did you know?

- The goal of nutrition during cancer treatment is to help your child feel strong and empowered.
- As your child goes through and finishes treatment, the body's nutritional needs may change.
- Offering healthy food gives you an opportunity to nourish and strengthen your child during treatment.
- Good nutrition helps promote the regeneration of new cell growth, which may be helpful during cancer treatment.
- Cancer treatments are more effective and side effects are more manageable when your child is well hydrated and well nourished.
- A strong nutritional plan supports immune system strength, recovery and resilience.

## Source Materials and Counsel

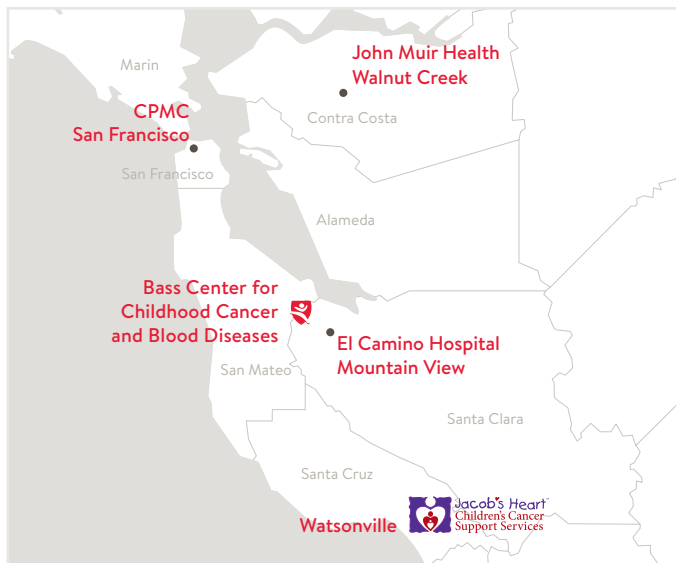
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## Content Developed With



Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services exists to improve the quality of life for children with cancer and support their families in the challenges they face.

Superheroes Against Childhood Cancer is Jacob's Heart's nutrition and wellness program—created to strengthen and empower families during treatment.

To learn more about nutrition and well-being during or after treatment, please visit [jacobsheart.org/superheroes](http://jacobsheart.org/superheroes), email [gabi@jacobsheart.org](mailto:gabi@jacobsheart.org) or call (831) 724-9100.