



Mesothelioma
Cancer Awareness

GLYNNIS GALE
FOUNDATION



Dietary Guide for people living with Mesothelioma

A guide for people with cancer, their families and friends.

ggfoundation.co.uk

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For people living with cancer choosing foods carefully can really help.

It is common to find that eating habits vary from day to day depending on how you feel, the type of treatment you have been given, how your foods taste, if you have a sore mouth, or feel nauseous etc.

Your mood can also have a big effect on eating habits and the enjoyment of food, especially if you are worried, anxious or depressed. Try to take things one day at a time and always seek individualised assistance from your medical team if you not managing to overcome challenges.

The information in this guide is aimed at people living with Mesothelioma as well as their family, friends or care givers who may be supporting with cooking and shopping etc.

Mesothelioma is a type of cancer and just like other cancers it can effect different people in different ways. This may be because of where the cancer is located in the body, its size, the different treatments used and different peoples' lifestyles.

Pleural Mesothelioma effects the inner lining of the chest wall. **Peritoneal Mesothelioma** effects the lining of the gut but is less common.

How to use this guide?

Start by reading the general healthy lifestyle section. The tips for coping with different treatment side effects can then be used, should you find these symptoms effect you.

Do you have a heart condition, diabetes, kidney disease, food allergies or follow a special diet for any condition? Please keep this in mind when following the tips in this guide. Most community clinics and hospitals have Dietitians available, with a referral. A Dietitian is specifically qualified to help you to manage more complex dietary needs, ask your medical team about a referral.

Visit www.adsa.org.za to find a list of Dietitians in private practice.

01 Healthy Lifestyle Choices



Lifestyle choices include being more active, maintaining a healthy weight, including a variety of foods and reducing carcinogens (cancer causing molecules), such as cigarettes.



Our very own South Africa Food Based Dietary Guidelines are a great starting point:

- Enjoy a variety of foods.
- Be Active.
- Make Starchy foods part of most meals.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit every day.
- Eat dry beans, split peas and lentils regularly.
- Have milk, maas or yogurt every day.
- Fish, chicken, lean meat or eggs can be eaten daily.
- Drink lots of clean, safe water.
- Use fats sparingly. Choose vegetable oils rather than hard fats.
- Use sugar and foods and drinks high in sugar sparingly.
- Use salt and food high in salt sparingly.
- Fruits and Vegetables: Having fruits and vegetables every day is important for our intake of fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidant nutrients.
- Include a variety of types and colours to get a range of nutrients.
- The fresher the better because the nutrient levels will be higher.
- Try growing some veggies at home so you can eat them straight from the soil.
- You may find vegetable and fruit juices make it easier to include more variety and larger portions.
- Salads, vegetables in soups/stews and frozen vegetables are also a great way to include more.

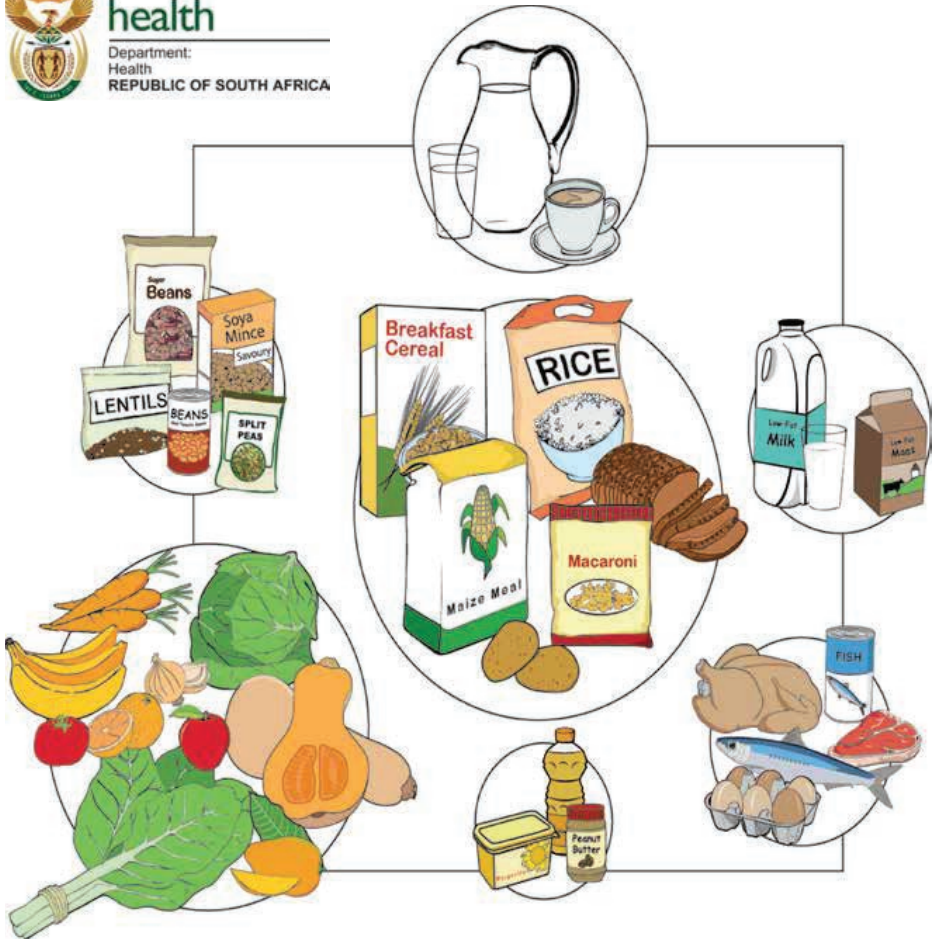
Aim for at least 5 portions a day, you can measure a portion as roughly a handful or half a cup of fresh chopped fruits and veggies or 100ml of juice. Research studies suggest eating more than 5 portions a day is even better.

Processed Meats such as smoked meats, sausages, hams, bacon and polony are classified as carcinogenic (cancer causing). Avoid eating processed meats too often, rather choose fresher cuts of meats, chicken or fish such as roast chicken and home cooked meats.



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Oily Fish like sardines, pilchards, salmon, trout and tuna have a good fat in them which can reduce inflammation, this fat is called omega-3. Look out for this on the label of tinned fish and frozen boxed fish.

Choose more unsaturated (good) fats and less saturated (animal) fats. Eat more vegetable fats; include nuts, nut butters, seeds, avocado, olive oil, canola oil, oily fish and vegetable margarine in your diet. Eat fewer animal fats; fatty cuts of meat, cheese, pies, pastries, cakes, biscuits, chips and fried foods. Rather than frying at home, bake or grill foods.

Activity

Try to include activity in your daily life. When feeling well it is recommended to be active for 30 minutes a day. Consider walking, gardening, swimming or something more structured like an exercise class or sport. Build up slowly from your own individual starting point and seek advice if you have not been active for some time. Your goal may start with a 5 minute stroll per day or to climb 1 flight of stairs.

Stopping Smoking is recommended but is often not easy. Ask for help from your clinic or medical team if you are finding it difficult to stop smoking.

02

Food Safety and Germs

General food safety principles are important for the whole family. Food Safety is even more important if you are unwell or have a lower immunity as you may find you get sick more easily than you used to from germs in food.

- Look for the 'use by date' on food packaging so you are not eating older foods which have had time to grow more germs.
- Keep cold foods cold, ideally in a refrigerator.
- Hands should be washed before cooking and before eating.
- Water must be clean and safe. You can boil water before drinking it if you are worried it is not clean and safe.
- Fruits and vegetables should be washed well.
- Cook hot foods until they are hot in the middle or boiling for at least 2 minutes.
- Eggs which are hard boiled and egg products made with pasturised egg are safe. Avoid raw or undercooked (soft) eggs.
- Meat and fish must be well cooked. Lightly cooked or smoked meats should be avoided.
- Yogurt and maas is safe as long as it is stored in a fridge.

03

Keeping a Food Record

A food record is a useful way to see how well you are managing with your eating goals.

You can take any piece of paper to write down what you have eaten and how you are feeling for a few days. It is good to record some days in the week as well as at the weekend. Your food record can be shown to your Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian to help them to see how you are doing and to help them to advise you on any changes which could help.



Things to record:

- The time food and drink was taken.
- What was the food or drink? For example - wholewheat bread with margarine or oats porridge with milk and sugar.
- How much was eaten, for example - a slice, a bowl, a teaspoon, 100mls, half a cup.
- Any feelings or symptoms, for example - nausea, taste changes, sore mouth, an upset tummy etc.

Example			
Time	Food	Amount	Feelings or Symptoms
8am	Maltabella + Sugar + Milk	Small bowl	Not very hungry

Table 1. Example of food record.

Feeling overweight?

If you feel you are overweight, it is better not to try to lose weight during active cancer treatment. Ask your doctor or nurse to help you to calculate your Body Mass Index if you are unsure if your weight is in the healthy range for your height.

Your medications and experience with cancer may reduce how active you are, lead to more snacking or make you feel more hungry because of stress. All of these changes could cause your weight to go up.

Try to stay as active as you can and follow some of the healthy eating tips in section 1 to prevent further weight gain.

If you have finished active treatment, moving towards a lower, healthier weight can help you to stay well in the future.

Losing weight without trying?

Weight loss is a common symptom of many different cancers. If you lose more than 5% of your body weight in 3 months, it is important to let your doctor know. Even if you still feel your weight is more than it should be.



For example: a 5% weight loss can be worked out by dividing your weight by 20. A person who normally weighs 100kg should tell their doctor about a weight loss of 5kg or more.

Other signs of weight loss are your rings becoming looser, or your clothes becoming too big, perhaps your belt has moved along to a hole or people have commented. **Read on to section 5.**

What is your weight goal?



Focus on section 1 about healthy lifestyle choices.

Try to eat from a smaller plate or bowl as this will help you to have smaller portions.

Try to eat varied and balanced meals, but limit snacks.

Watch out for sugary or fatty snack foods or drinks which give lots of energy but little goodness (protein, vitamins and minerals). Try to keep these foods for special occasions such as celebrations.

Eat more freshly prepared foods, this allows you to have more control over the ingredients. Keep foods and snacks simple, you do not have to be the next Masterchef to eat well.

05

Losing weight? How to eat more

Sections 5 to 12 will give you some extra food based tips to help with possible treatment and cancer related side effects.



Aim for a little and often eating pattern. Something every 2 hours would be great. Aiming for 3 meals and 3 snacks or 6 small meals per day.



Losing weight without trying or feeling bloated?

How to eat more energy and protein . . .
The most common symptom of Peritoneal Mesothelioma is bloating. Bloating may make you less hungry and make it more difficult to eat a full size meal. Pleural Mesothelioma and medication side effects can also reduce appetite.

Start by looking at the foods you are able to eat. Family foods can bring the most enjoyment and are usually more affordable than specialized supplements.

Try keeping a food record and then think about:

- Can I eat more often and add in extra snacks?
- Can I add more energy and protein to meals (Food Fortification)?
- Can I buy foods which already have extra nutrients added such as supplement drinks?
- Do I need extra support with some cooking and shopping?

Look at ways to fortify foods with extra protein and fats, to get the most energy out of the smallest portion. Protein helps our muscles and cells to repair and grow. Foods high in protein are meat, fish, eggs and dairy products such as milk, maas, yogurt and cheese. Protein is also found in plant foods like beans, lentils, soya and nuts.

Try adding milk powder or Nespray to milky dishes as a way to boost protein. Experiment adding powdered milk to soups, cheese sauces and milky puddings.

Adding extra fats, such as oils and margarine will add more energy. Just 1 teaspoon of oil added into a stew or curry will provide an extra 45kcal or 188kj.

Add a teaspoon or 2 of vegetable or canola oil to savoury dishes such as pasta, chicken a la King, samp and beans, phutu, curries, stews and soups. Add extra margarine onto vegetables and use a dressing on salads. Look for vegetable oils high in monounsaturated fats, these are anti-inflammatory and rich in energy.

You might notice the heart foundation logo or CANSA logo on packaging. This indicates the product is a good choice.

Peanut butter or other nut butters can be added to porridges and smoothies, giving extra fats, protein and energy. Try to include a protein food with 3 meals in each day. Diabetic? Please remember to follow your diabetic diet, do not add extra sugar for energy.

Nutritional supplement are a quick and easy snack, with a good balance of nutrition. Diabetic? Look for the Diabetic shakes with less sugar, slowly absorbed low GI options or ask the Pharmacist, your Doctor or Dietitian. Try different products to find one which you like the taste of. Examples include Ensure, clicks own brand supplement shake, Replace or Lifegain.

Look for labels which say nutritionally complete, rather than choosing a protein powder. The extra vitamins and minerals are important, as well as the protein.

Fortified cereals such as Future life High protein or ProNutro make a good alternative to milkshake supplements like Ensure or Lifegain.

Eggs can also make a good high protein snack with 1 egg giving 6g protein. For example, scrambled egg with extra butter or margarine is soft and easy to eat.

200ml of full cream milk will give you 6g protein. Milky puddings, Milo, custard or hot chocolate are great snacks or puddings. The best time to take a shake or supplements is in between, or after meals.

Always speak to your Doctor, Dietitian or Nurse before taking any vitamin or mineral tablets, because these can affect how your medications work. Let your healthcare team know if you are having difficulties or if you choose to take a supplement shake, so they can better help you.

06 Feeling Tired?

Feeling tired is common. Feeling worried, not eating well, losing weight and having low vitamin levels can all make you feel tired.

Ask your doctor if your treatment may have lowered any of your nutrients? A low Iron or vitamin B12 level is a common cause of tiredness, this may be caused by your treatment and CAN be corrected. Use the Food record in section 3 to help you to see if you are eating less than you realized.

Have you lost weight? This can make you feel more tired. Try to eat little and often and add in extra snacks or nutritional drinks. Exercise or fresh air before meals may help you to enjoy meals more. And relieve tiredness.

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Ask your doctor if your treatment may have lowered any of your nutrients?



07

Difficulty Breathing?

Trying to breath and chew can be a challenge if you are short of breath. Because Mesothelioma usually effects the tissue around the lungs, breathing can be difficult.

Some foods and drinks create more carbon dioxide when they are digested which can also make breathing more difficult. Foods high in sugar and starchy carbohydrates which are quickly digested such as white bread, biscuits, large potatoes and mealie meal porridge should be limited.

Try choosing:

- Softer foods which need less chewing or chop foods into smaller pieces.
- Smaller meals but eat more often.
- Limit sweets and foods with lots of added sugar.
- A sports energy drink with less sugar, would be better than a regular cool drink like Coke, sprite or Fanta. Or try mixing half fruit juice with half water.
- Bread products made with wholewheat or brown flours, rather than white flour.
- Baby potatoes, sweet potatoes amadumbe, pasta and macaroni are all slowly absorbed.
- Mealie meal which has been cooked and then cooled is more slowly absorbed.
- Look for the words LOW GI on the labels of foods such as bread and cereals.

08

Difficulty Swallowing?

Difficulty with chewing and swallowing can happen after radiotherapy, especially if the treatment was close to the neck. Focus on moist foods with extra gravy or sauce. Have a drink close by at mealtimes as sips may help the foods to go down more easily.

Think about softer foods than you normally enjoy, mashed potato, soft mealie pap, macaroni cheese, tuna with mayo, soups and stews.

Milky puddings or nutritious drinks make a great snack. Try custard, banana custard, milo, rice/sago/tapioca pudding.

Choose softer fruits such as PawPaw or stewed harder fruits such as stewed apple or pear.

Try cooking foods for a little longer and with gravy or sauce e.g., slow cooked chicken thighs in a stew rather than roast chicken.

Make a sausage stew instead or grilled sausages. Have minced beef as a curry or bolognaise rather than choosing steak or a burger.

09

Sore mouth or taste changes?

Inflammation of the mouth, lips or tongue can make eating more difficult. Some people experience a sore mouth or taste changes from chemotherapy and occasionally radiotherapy.

- Foods at room temperature and with a softer texture may be easier to eat.
- Crispy, crunchy and salty foods may make the mouth more sore.
- Take pain medications before meals or as prescribed by your doctor.
- Take a look at the Swallowing tips in section 8.
- Sip fluids regularly to prevent a dry mouth.
- Choose the foods which taste best to you
- Meats are commonly described as having a different taste, adding lemon juice or tomato based sauces may help.
- If meat does not taste nice, remember to eat other protein foods such as dairy, nuts, beans and fish.

10

Nausea and vomiting?

Medication is the main treatment for nausea and vomiting. Different people may notice different trigger foods for nausea and this can be related to past experiences, where a food has been eaten and then you felt unwell.

- Try eating small frequent meals and snacks, to prevent getting over hungry.
- Experiment with different foods and drinks as they may taste different to normal.
- Avoiding strong smelling foods and ask someone else to cook, so you can avoid the cooking smells.
- Try eating cold foods such as sandwiches, pasta salads, cold custard, cereals etc. Because cold foods have less smell.
- Soft moist foods may be better than foods which need a lot of chewing.
- Salty foods can settle nausea, try nibbling crackers, toast or salty chips (as long as your mouth is not sore).
- Ginger is a popular herbal remedy for nausea.



Try ginger tea, ginger ale, ginger biscuits and ginger in cooking.



Be cautious if you have a sensitive mouth.

11

Diarrhoea and Constipation?

Diarrhoea

Once Diarrhoea has settled, including soluble fibre in your regular diet can help to keep stools more solid. (See Table 2)

Soluble Fiber	Insoluble Fiber
Oats	Wheat Bran
Barley	Wholegrains
Nuts	Brown rice
Beans and lentils	Skins on fruits and vegetables
Peeled fruits	
Sweet Potatoes and butternut	

Table 2. Soluble and Insoluble Fiber

Constipation

Having more fiber and fluid are the 2 most helpful dietary changes.

Include water, tea and dilute fruit juices regularly in the day. Aim for 8 glasses. Choose less coffee as this can dehydrate you. Increase foods rich in both soluble and insoluble fiber.



If you have a sensitive or bloated tummy, soluble fibres will most likely be more easily managed.



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For more information and support
on cancer-related issues, contact us.

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We act as a voice for those affected by Mesothelioma in Southern Africa.