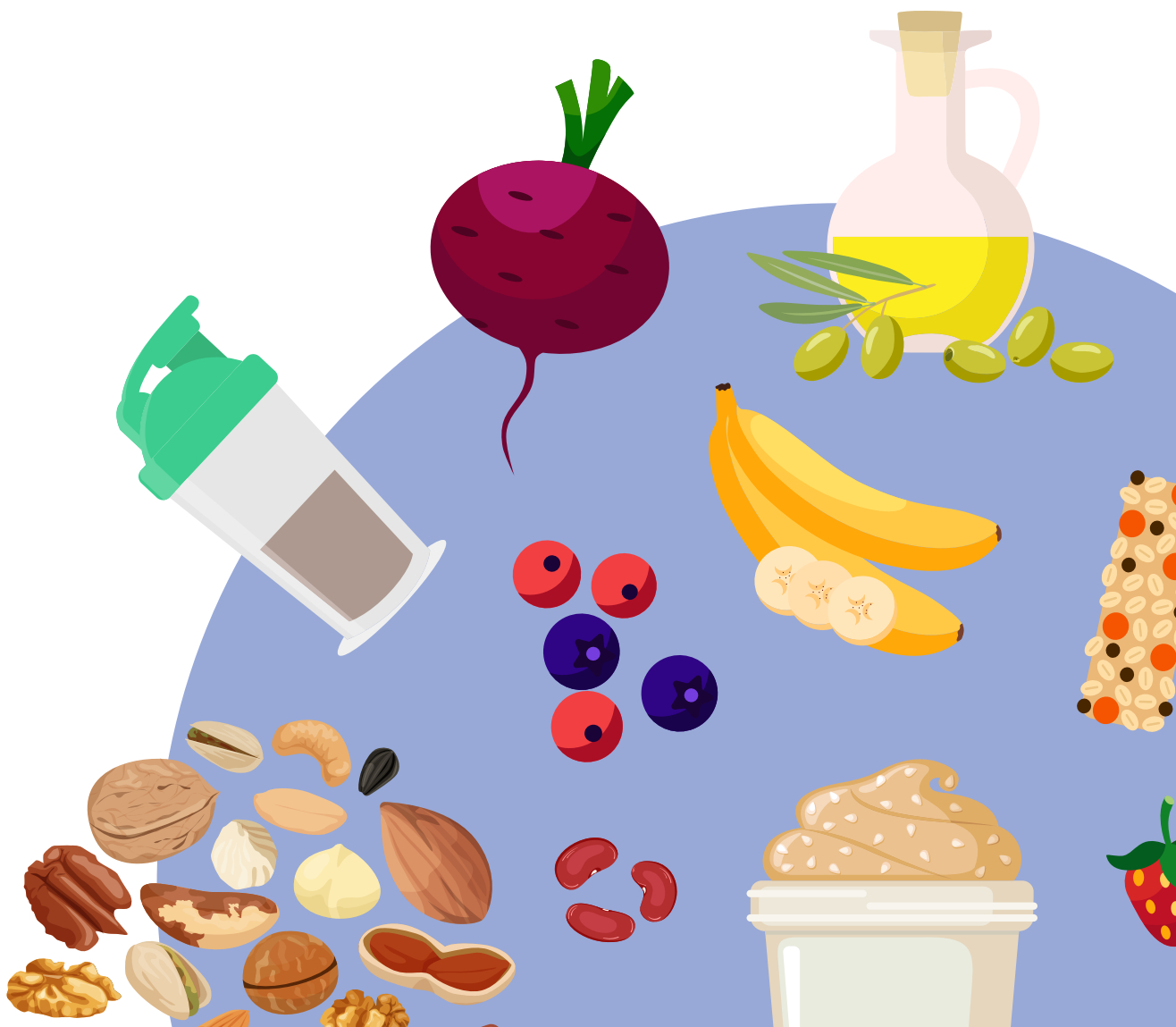


# Nourishing plant-based diet

In this guide we look at what you can do to build your energy, maintain your muscle mass, and get the key nutrients your body needs during your cancer treatment.



# Introduction

During cancer treatment your body may need extra nourishment to stay strong, manage treatment side-effects, and support recovery. If you follow a plant-based diet, it is important that you are able to meet these extra nutritional needs.

A plant-based diet is one that mostly or entirely contains food from plants. This includes:

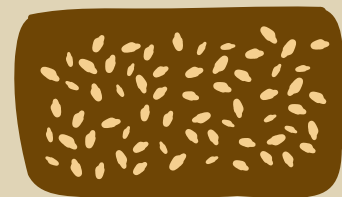
**Vegetables and salads**



**Fruits**



**Whole grains, oats, potatoes, noodles, rice and quinoa**



**Beans, peas, lentils and chick peas**



**Nuts and seeds**



**Soya, tofu, tempeh, seitan and quorn products**



# 1 Eat more protein

Protein helps your body stay strong, heal itself, and fight off infections. During cancer treatment it is important to protect your muscles and support your immune system. Not getting enough protein in your diet can make you feel weaker and increase your risk of illness.

Good plant-based protein sources include:

## Soya

(like tofu, tempeh, soya mince or milk)



## Beans and lentils

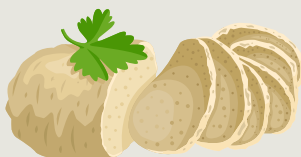


## Nuts and seeds



## Seitan

(a wheat-based protein)



## How much?

Aim for

# 20g

of protein from food  
at each meal

---

# 10g

when having a snack

## Protein powders

You may find it hard to get enough protein from food alone, so you can add protein powders made from soya, peas, hemp, or rice. Look for powders that say they contain a blend of protein sources as this helps to make sure you get all the essential amino acids your body needs.



**TIP**

# High protein foods

## Approximate weights to provide 10g protein

---

50g of almonds, peanuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower, linseeds or seed and nut mix

---

60g of cashews or pistachios

---

70g of Brazil nuts, pine nuts or walnuts

---

100g of pecan nuts

---

100g of puy lentils

---

130g of chickpeas, cannellini, falafel or haricot beans

---

145g black eye beans, borlotti, kidney beans or red lentils

---

160g butter beans or green lentils

---

200g baked beans or baked beans with plant-based sausages

---

200g (cooked weight) quinoa

---

25g (dry weight) of pasta made with black beans, chickpeas, edamame beans, green peas, red lentils or soya beans

---

75g (dry weight) of wheat pasta or freekeh

---

Bean burgers (2x100g)

---

50g meat free mince (soya, pea and rice proteins)

---

20g dried soya mince or 50g fresh/frozen soy mince

---

50g tempeh

---

135g silken tofu

---

60g extra firm tofu

---

145g Quorn slices (chicken free, bacon free etc)

---

## 2 Eat healthy fats

Healthy fats are a great way to add extra energy to your meals and snacks. They are also useful if you are trying to gain weight during your cancer treatment. Fats help your body absorb important vitamins like A, D, E and K.

Healthy fats include:

**Olive, avocado or rapeseed oil**

when cooking



**Nut butters**

such as peanut or almond butter on toast, crackers or fruit



**Tahini**

(sesame seed pastes) in sauces or dips



**Oil-based dressings**

on salads or vegetables



## 3 Eat little and often

Instead of three big meals, try having five to six smaller meals spread throughout the day. Eating every 2 – 3 hours can help you get more nourishment without feeling too full.



## 4 Choose high energy snacks

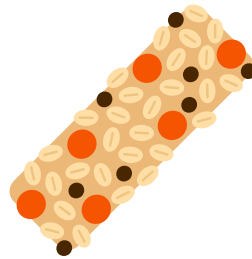
Snacks can be a great way to get extra energy and protein through the day. Keep easy snacks with you in your bag or pocket so you don't miss a chance to eat when you are on the go. This can be especially helpful when you have hospital appointments or treatments.

Here are some quick and nourishing snacks that are easy to prepare and can help keep your strength up:

### Trail mix



### Nut bars



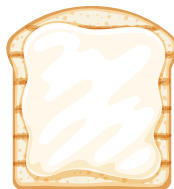
### Hummus with whole grain crackers



### Sesame snap bars



### Almond-based cream cheese spread on toast or crackers



### Sliced apple with peanut butter



# 5 Have nourishing drinks

Smoothies and milkshakes are a simple and tasty way to add extra calories.



You can blend together:

## Fruits and vegetables



## Nut butters

(like peanut or almond)



## Tahini (sesame seed paste)



## Seeds (like chia or flax)



## Nutritional yeast



## Plant based milk alternatives –

(milk/yoghurt alternatives such as soya, oat, almond or coconut)



**TIP**

To make them even more nourishing you can add some protein powder (see the tip in Section 1).



## Plant -based fortified milk recipe

You can fortify plant-based milk to boost the amount of energy and protein. Mix 40g of plant-based protein powder into 600ml of plant-based milk. The fortified milk can be used in hot or cold drinks and adds an extra 20g of protein.

**40g**

plant-based protein powder



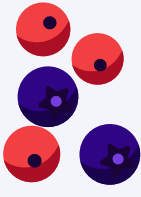



**+**

**600ml**

plant-based milk

## Making drinks tastier

You can make drinks tastier by adding the following to 250ml plant-based fortified milk recipe:

					
One tablespoon of smooth peanut butter and a small banana	One tablespoon of plant-based chocolate spread	A handful of frozen berries	Mango cubes and a small pot of coconut or almond yoghurt	One small pot of fruit flavoured soya yoghurt	Pure maple syrup, date syrup or agarve syrup

## 6 Check your micronutrient intake in your diet

Some nutrients may be harder to get from plant foods alone, so you may need to include fortified foods or supplements. Pay special attention to:

**Vitamin B12** – needed for energy and healthy nerves

**Iodine** – supports thyroid health

**Calcium** – keeps bones strong

**Vitamin D** – helps absorb calcium and supports your immune system

**Iron** – carries oxygen around your body

**Selenium** - supports your immune system

**Zinc** – helps with healing and fighting infections

**Omega 3 fats** - supports heart and brain health

Scan QR code or follow the link below for more information:



**The Vegan Society - 4 Nutrients to Consider Supplementing on a Vegan Diet** <https://www.vegansociety.com/news/blog/VEG12023/4-nutrients-consider-supplementing-vegan-diet>

# 7 Keep muscles strong with physical activity and gentle strength exercises

Eating enough protein and energy helps keep your muscles healthy and strong. Gentle strength exercises can also help you stay strong and gain weight in a healthy way. Physical activity including walking , dancing , swimming or cycling and gentle strength exercises can also help you to stay strong and gain weight in a healthy way

Exercises could include:

**Lifting weights**



**Resistance bands**



**Squats**



It is safe for most people living with cancer to stay active. If you are new to physical activity, have physical limitations, or bone concerns, check with your healthcare team first. To learn more about how to exercise safely with cancer, scan the QR codes or follow the links below:



**Macmillan Cancer Support - Physical activity and cancer**

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatment/preparing-for-treatment/physical-activity-and-cancer>



**NHS - Strength and Flex exercise plan: How-to videos**

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flex-exercise-plan-how-to-videos/>

# Getting support

Ask to see a dietitian if you are frequently unable to manage meals and /or nourishing snacks. You may benefit from a specialist plant based product to help ensure that you are getting all the nutrition you need.



## Contact details:

This diet sheet has been written by Deborah Howland,  
Registered dietitian.

It has been peer reviewed by dietitians of the Oncology  
Specialist Group of the British Dietetic Association.

This version: January 2026.