

## **Nutritional Supplements**

This handout offers you information on:

- The different types of nutritional supplements
- When to drink or eat nutritional supplements
- How to store nutritional supplements
- Challenges with nutritional supplements
- Recipe ideas using nutritional supplements

You may have less of an appetite and lose weight during your cancer treatments. Having cancer and cancer treatments can increase your need for calories, protein and other nutrients. It is important to eat and drink enough to keep your best body weight. This helps your body:

- Improve energy and strength
- Maintain muscle mass and muscle strength
- Tolerate cancer treatments better
- Heal and recover from surgery or injury
- Fight infections

It is important to get your calories, protein and nutrients from a variety of foods. Nutritional supplements can help if you are not able to do this.

### **Types of nutritional supplements**

There are many types of nutritional supplements. They include drinks, powders and puddings. Some brand names of nutritional supplements include Ensure®, Boost®, Boost® Fruit Flavoured Beverage, Boost® powder and Premier Protein. Generic (store) brands may cost less than brand names (examples include: Equate found at Walmart; President's Choice found at Superstore; Loblaws, No Frills; and Nutrium found at Metro).

All nutritional supplements provide calories, protein and nutrients. Choose the supplement that tastes best to you. If you like it, you are more likely to drink or eat it. You do not need to compare the nutritional content of the supplement. They are all very similar.

There are special nutritional supplements available for people with medical conditions such as diabetes and kidney disease. Ask to talk to a dietitian if you need help in choosing a nutritional supplement.

### **When to drink or eat nutritional supplements**

Drink or eat nutritional supplements between meals or after meals. This can help you feel like eating food at meal times. We recommend you drink or eat smaller amounts of a nutritional supplement at a time. For example: drink 2 to 4 ounces (75ml to 125ml) each time.

## How to store nutritional supplements

Store unopened nutritional supplements at room temperature. Check the expiry date before you drink or eat the nutritional supplement to make sure it has not expired. Store opened nutritional supplements in the fridge and use within 2 days after opening.

## How to manage common challenges with nutritional supplements

The chart below offers information on how to manage common challenges.

Challenge	What you can do to manage this challenge
Too sweet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blend in soft tofu, plain yogurt or ice cream.</li><li>• Dilute the supplement with milk, soy milk, cream, ice or water.</li><li>• Add fruit such as strawberries, bananas, papaya, mango, raspberries, blueberries, or peaches. Fruit can be fresh, frozen or canned.</li><li>• Refrigerate or partially freeze supplements before drinking them.</li><li>• Flavour with instant coffee (dissolve 1 teaspoon of instant coffee in a small amount of hot water. Add the coffee to the supplement).</li><li>• Add water, soda water, juice or pop to juice type nutritional supplements.</li></ul>
Too thick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dilute with milk, soy milk or water.</li></ul>
Tired of the taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add flavouring extracts (examples: vanilla, almond, butterscotch, lemon, orange, and rum).</li><li>• Use the supplement to replace milk or water in recipes (example: hot cereal, pudding, coffee, hot chocolate, soup, pancakes).</li><li>• Blend the supplement into a smoothie or milkshake.</li></ul>

## Recipe ideas

### Peach Shake

1 carton (235 mL) of a vanilla flavoured nutritional supplement

¼ of a teaspoon (1 mL) vanilla

¼ of a teaspoon (1 mL) cinnamon

½ cup (125 mL) canned peaches in heavy syrup

Place ingredients in blender and blend until smooth.

### Banana Orange Shake

1 carton of orange Boost® Fruit Beverage

3 grams of soft tofu

1 small banana

1 tablespoon (15 mL) of frozen orange juice concentrate

Place ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

### Boost® Fruit Beverage Jell-O

1 package of flavoured gelatin crystals

1 cup (250 mL) of boiling water

1 carton (235ml) of Boost® Fruit Beverage (choose a flavour you like).

- Combine boiling water and gelatin crystals. Stir until crystals are dissolved (for about 2 minutes).
- Stir in Boost® Fruit Beverage and chill until set.
- Add fruit, marshmallows or grated vegetables.

### Frozen Delight

1 package of instant pudding

2 cups (500 mL) of an unflavoured nutritional supplement

1 cup (250 mL) of whipped topping/whipped cream

- Prepare pudding as directed on the package, replacing the milk with the supplement.
- Refrigerate for about 1 hour.
- Gently mix in whipped topping.
- Choose to add some of your favourite fruit.

Pour into a container. Cover and freeze until firm.

### Chai Latte

½ carton (125 ml) of vanilla nutritional supplement

1 chai tea bag

½ cup (125ml) of boiling water

- Prepare the chai tea (steep for about 4 minutes).
- Warm the nutritional supplement on the stove or in the microwave.

Mix the tea and supplement together.

### **Websites**

The websites of the brand name supplements offer more information and recipes. Some of the sites also offer coupons.

1. Ensure® - [ensure.ca](https://www.ensure.ca)
2. Boost® - [madewithnestle.ca/boost](https://www.madewithnestle.ca/boost)

Ask to talk to a dietitian in the cancer centre if you are not able to eat or you are losing weight.

We wish to thank the BC Cancer Agency for sharing the contents of this booklet for our use. Minor changes were made to make the content appropriate for the Durham Regional Cancer Centre/Central East Regional Cancer Program.

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