Good nutrition helps your body to tolerate cancer treatment better and with fewer side effects. It can also help you feel better and raise your energy level.

Common treatments for cancers of the head and neck have side effects that affect the way you eat:

- Changes in taste and smell
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Dry mouth and throat
- Loss of appetite
- Sore mouth and throat
- Thick saliva

Tips to Make Sure You Are Eating Well

- **Weigh yourself** one to two times per week at home or at your doctor appointments. Set a goal to prevent weight loss. Weight loss during and after treatment is a sign that you are not getting enough food.

- **Eat five times per day.** Small, frequent meals and snacks make it easier to get all of the nutrients you need.

- **Choose soft, moist foods.** These will be easier to swallow than dry foods with rough textures. Some ideas include liquid nutrition supplements, eggs, cottage cheese, yogurt, smoothies, tuna fish, Crock-Pot meals, and casseroles.

- **Drink water** and other liquids to stay hydrated and to keep your mouth moist. Choose caffeine-free liquids since caffeine causes you to lose fluids.

- **Eat, drink, and perform the swallowing exercises** given by the speech therapist. This keeps swallowing muscles strong. Continue to do this even if it becomes painful. Call your doctor with any questions.

When to Use Your Feeding Tube

Many patients have a feeding tube placed before treatment begins. The tube allows liquid nutrition formula to go directly into the stomach if it is not possible to eat enough to maintain weight. Follow these instructions if you have a feeding tube:

- **Start using your feeding tube** when treatment side effects prevent you from eating enough. Weight loss of three to four pounds in a week is a sign that you may not be eating enough.

- **Replace each meal you miss** with one to two cans of formula. For example, if you are only able to eat three small meals instead of five, replace the two missed meals with two feeding-tube meals.

- **Use more cans of formula as you eat and drink less by mouth.** This will help you to stay well fed.

- **Stay hydrated by using your feeding tube for water.**

- **Place only water and formula** in your feeding tube. Do not use any other liquids or pureed foods in the tube. This can cause a clog and require replacing the tube.
About Your Feeding Tube
Your feeding tube is called a gastrostomy tube (G-tube). The G-tube passes through your abdomen and delivers liquid food directly to your stomach. We will show you how to feed yourself through the G-tube before you leave the hospital.

Bolus Feeding Using a Syringe
Bolus feeding means a meal-sized amount of liquid food is given through the G-tube. You will do this several times a day. Bolus feeding is given using a syringe.

Your dietitian will tell you how much liquid food to use for each bolus feeding and how often. You will need these items for a bolus feeding:

- G-tube
- Liquid nutrition formula
- Feeding syringe

Your Nutrition Needs

- Current weight _________________________________
- Calories needed to maintain weight _________________
- Protein needed to heal ___________________________
- Fluid needs ____________________________________
- Tube feeding formula ____________________________

_______ cans of formula per day will make sure that you meet your calorie and protein needs.

- Flush the G-tube with _______ oz. of water after each feeding.
- Drink an extra ________ oz. of water daily. If you are unable to drink by mouth, use your G-tube.

- Notes
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