Article Series Nutrition

Add these 6 nutritious foods to your grocery list

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There’s no one-size-fits-all eating plan when you’re living with cancer. In fact, your taste preferences and dietary challenges may vary day-to-day and week-to-week.

Eating a variety of nutritious foods may support your immune system and maintain your strength, which can help you cope with the side effects of treatment.

Here’s a list of six foods you may want to add to your shopping list during your cancer journey. Experiment with flavors and textures to find what works for you, as your preferences may change over time. Always consult with your healthcare team

before trying unfamiliar foods, especially if you have dietary restrictions or sensitivities.

1. Fermented foods: Fermented foods, such as yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, kefir and tempeh contain probiotics that can support gut health and digestion. Eating fermented foods can promote a healthier gut microbiome, which is the name given to the trillions of bacteria, viruses and fungi in our intestinal tracts. Talk to your care team before adding fermented foods to your diet, and opt for commercially prepared options from reputable brands that follow strict food safety standards.

2. Coconut water: If you're looking for ways to hydrate beyond water and sports drinks, coconut water is a natural source of electrolytes, which are essential minerals that are important for nerve and muscle function and other bodily processes. Coconut water already is naturally sweet, so consider unsweetened coconut water to avoid excess added sugar if you find it tastes good. Coconut water may interact with your kidneys and may not be recommended before surgery, so consult with your care team before adding coconut water to your diet as it may cause problems, including possibly interfering with surgery, especially if you have any underlying kidney problem.

3. Pumpkin seeds: You could snack on roasted seeds, add them to oatmeal or yogurt, or sprinkle over salads and soups. Pumpkin seeds are a source of plant protein, fiber and healthy fats. In addition, they are a good source of magnesium and tryptophan, which can promote sleep. Because pumpkin seeds are high in Vitamin E, they can have a blood thinning effect, so consult with your care team if you're taking blood thinners.

4. Bone broth: Hot broth may be a source of nutrients when you don't feel like eating. This could be because of mouth sores, nausea or loss of appetite. Bone broth is nutrient-dense, including calcium, magnesium, and collagen, and can help with hydration and protein intake.

5. Ginger: Ginger is a popular spice that adds flavor and zest to foods, but it may

also help with nausea. You can make ginger tea by steeping freshly grated or sliced ginger in hot water. Add heat-treated honey or lemon and sip slowly. You can add crystalized ginger to muffins or salads or just eat a little on its own. Ginger can interact with blood thinners and some other medications, so talk to your care team before using it regularly.

6. Sweet potatoes: Sweet potatoes aren't just a comfort food – they're also a super food rich with fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants and even some protein. They are also a rich natural source of beta-carotene, which can support a healthy immune system. Check out another resource for foods high in fiber called 'High-fiber food swaps for help managing constipation.'

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