

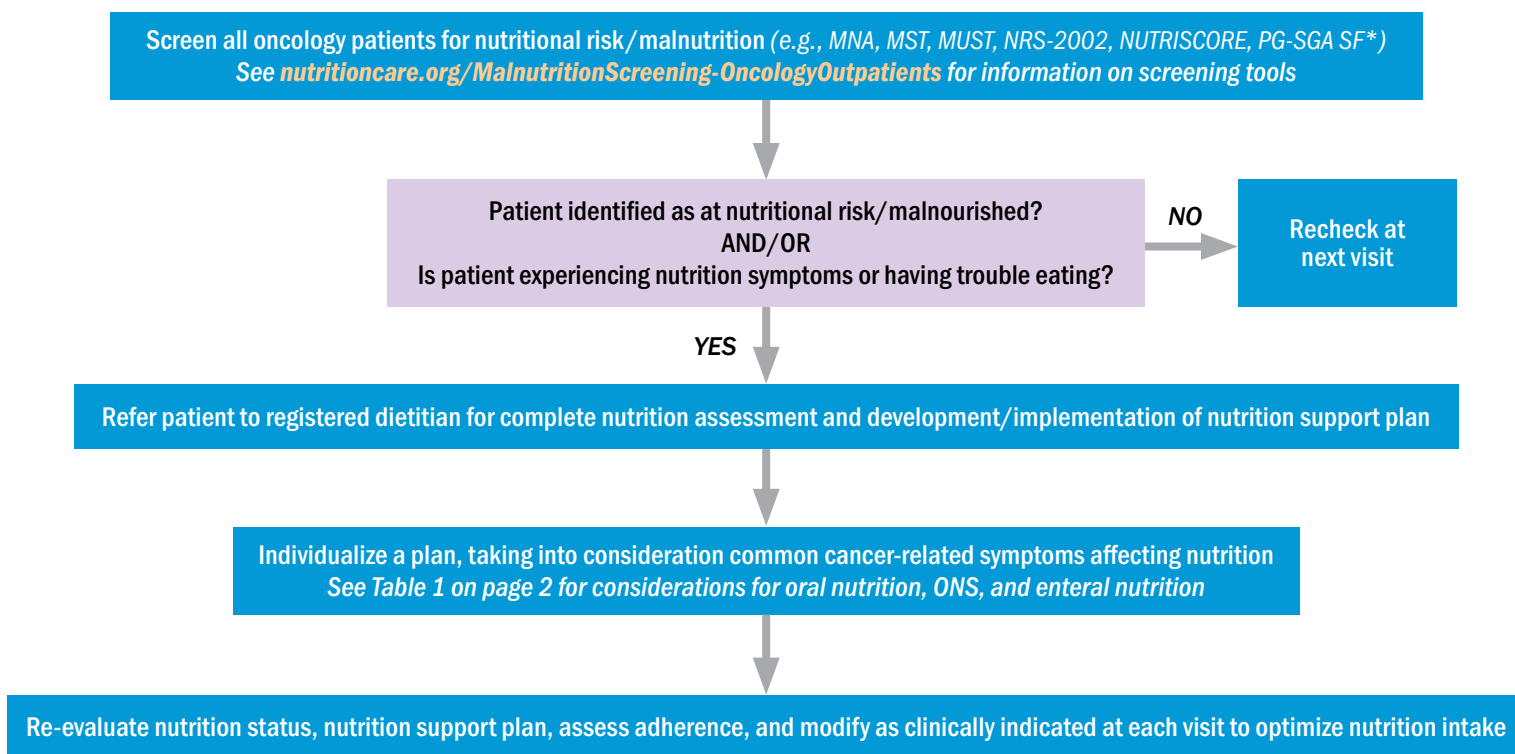
Nutrition Considerations for the Oncology Patient: Oral Nutrition, Oral Nutrition Supplements, and Enteral Nutrition

Patients with cancer face a higher risk of malnutrition due to the disease itself and side effects from treatment. Identifying the appropriate nutritional support—whether it be oral diet, oral nutrition supplements (ONS), or enteral nutrition—to meet unique patient needs can help:

- Maintain adequate nutrition and body stores
- Reduce the risk of developing malnutrition
- Treat malnutrition
- Manage cancer treatment side effects
- Improve quality of life, function, and performance status

Oncology patients who are well nourished may tolerate cancer therapy better than those who are malnourished and may have improved cancer-related outcomes. Attempts should be made to optimize nutrition, including calories, protein, and plant-based foods. Fruit and vegetable ingredients contain beneficial phytonutrients—plant compounds with health-protecting qualities that are most effective when ingested from foods rather than supplements.

This practice tool is intended to serve as a clinical guide when individualizing nutrition support plans. It accounts for common cancer-related symptoms that affect nutrition to help optimize outcomes.



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*MNA = Mini Nutritional Assessment; MST = Malnutrition Screening Tool; MUST = Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool; NRS-2002 = Nutrition Screening Tool 2002; PG-SGA SF = Patient-Generated Subjective Global Assessment Short Form

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Table 1. Cancer Related Symptoms Affecting Nutrition for Oncology Patients – Select Considerations for Oral Nutrition, ONS, and Enteral Nutrition

	Poor Appetite (Anorexia)	Nausea/Vomiting	Mouth Sores/Mucositis	Taste or Smell Changes	Dry Mouth	Problems Swallowing	Diarrhea	Constipation	Fatigue	Weight Loss
Diet considerations if able to eat orally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat smaller more frequent meals/snacks • Eat when appetite and energy are highest, regardless of time • Drink liquids between meals to avoid filling up on beverages at meal-time • Prioritize protein-rich/calorie-rich foods and snacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat smaller, more frequent meals/snacks • Eat cold, clear liquids that are easy on stomach • Eat bland foods • Avoid dairy, high fat, spicy, and strong-smelling foods • Maintain adequate hydration • Prioritize protein-rich/calorie-rich foods and snacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate hydration (e.g., eight 8-oz glasses of fluids/day) • Eat chilled foods/fluids • Eat soft, easy to swallow foods • Eat smaller, more frequent meals/snacks • Avoid alcohol, raw fruits and vegetables, hard/dry foods, and acidic foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plastic cutlery and glass cups and plates • Cook food in glass pots and pans rather than metal • Try fresh or frozen foods rather than canned • Try marinades, dressings, herbs, & spices to improve flavor • Eat foods that are cold or at room temperature • Blend fresh fruits into shakes or smoothies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate hydration (e.g., eight 8-oz glasses of fluids/day) • Eat small, well-chewed bites • Add liquids (e.g., gravy, sauce) to solid foods • Avoid hot, spicy, acidic foods • Avoid foods that are difficult to chew, hard, dry, sticky, and sugary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat bland, soft, smooth foods • Eat smaller, more frequent meals/snacks • Try thicker* liquids such as pureed or blended foods • Prioritize protein-rich/calorie-rich foods and snacks • Eat foods that are cool or lukewarm • Avoid foods that are difficult to chew, hard, dry, acidic or spicy and avoid alcohol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods, foods high in fat or sugar, and acidic foods • Drink mild, clear liquids • Eat foods high in soluble fiber such as bananas, canned peaches, rice, and applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids • Increase daily intake of fiber, particularly insoluble fiber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a balanced diet that includes protein, fruit, vegetables and whole grains • Ensure adequate hydration (e.g., eight 8-oz glasses of fluids/day) • Prioritize protein-rich/calorie-rich foods and snacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate hydration (e.g., eight 8-oz glasses of fluids/day), but consume liquid between (not during) meals to avoid early satiety • Eat smaller more frequent meals/snacks • Prioritize protein-rich/calorie-rich foods and snacks
Product considerations if ONS or enteral nutrition indicated <i>Consider peptide-based formula if intolerance to standard formula</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Modular additives (if clinically warranted) • Contains real fruit and vegetable ingredients and/or blenderized whole foods • Palatable taste† 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Dairy free • Contains real fruit and vegetable ingredients and/or blenderized whole foods • Peptide-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Not acidic • Dairy free • Fruit flavored versus creamy chocolate/vanilla flavors (patients may prefer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Palatable taste† and smell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Not acidic • Not sweet • Palatable taste† 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Thicker and/or consider commercial thickeners* (if oral) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains fiber, particularly soluble fiber • Contains real fruit and vegetable ingredients and/or blenderized whole foods • Peptide-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains fiber, particularly insoluble fiber • Contains real fruit and vegetable ingredients and/or blenderized whole foods • Dairy free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Contains real fruit and vegetable ingredients and/or blenderized whole foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High caloric density • High protein • Contains real fruit and vegetable ingredients and/or blenderized whole foods • Modular additives may be indicated

* Work with speech language pathologist to determine clinically appropriate thickness and texture

† Patients may need to try multiple options to identify palatable taste profile. Fruity flavor may be preferred by those with mucositis or mouth sores.

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