

#### **Healthy Eating Guidelines**

## **Contents**

02	The importance of healthy eating	
03	Our approach to healthy eating	
04	The healthy eating plate	
05	Vegetables, fruit, herbs and spices	
06	Protein foods	
07	Foods containing fats	
08	Carbohydrates	
09	Water, tea and coffee	
10	Foods to avoid	
12	The importance of good digestion	
13	Mindful eating	
14	The importance of healthy weight	
16	Making dietary changes	
18	Easy ways to healthier eating	
20	Menu for a day	
22	Frequently asked questions	
24	Summary – our food table	

## How to use these Guidelines

This booklet is offered as general guidance rather than a prescription. Each individual is unique with their own personal nutritional requirements that depend, amongst other things, on genetic make up, medical history, stage of treatment and current state of health, lifestyle as well as tastes and preferences.

We suggest you experiment with the guidelines and adapt them to suit your own tastes and needs. They have been written for people affected by cancer or those wishing to reduce their risk of cancer.

If you have special dietary needs or problems with eating, swallowing or digestion, or with weight loss you should seek further advice from a nutritionally-qualified health professional, with experience of working with people affected by cancer.

# The importance of healthy eating

Scientists now know that many factors lead to the development of cancer. Some of these are inherited and some are related to our lifestyles.

Even the inherited factors can be influenced by things like stress, nutrition and exercise as these change our body chemistry, which directly affects cancer cell growth and development.

This explains the strong evidence linking lifestyle (for example, whether we smoke, how much alcohol we drink, the food we eat, our physical activity, our stress levels, and our thoughts, beliefs and emotions) with cancer risk and also with the health of someone affected by cancer.

Disease recurrence and progression, symptoms and treatment side effects, plus the risk of related illnesses and overall quality of life are all affected by how we live our lives, and nutrition plays a large role in this.

# The Bristol Whole Life Approach to healthy eating

Our approach to healthy eating helps to support people with the physical impact of cancer but also the psychological, emotional and spiritual impacts.

#### What to eat

To obtain a full range of essential and beneficial nutrients, eat a wide variety of natural whole foods. Choose foods in a rainbow of different colours. Our bodies naturally need a wide range of foods and a good balance of healthy fats, proteins and carbohydrates as well as a range of vitamins, minerals and other micronutrients.

Foods in their natural state have a number of beneficial nutrients which may be lost when they are processed or refined. Some processing, such as cooking, can be helpful, as it makes some foods easier to digest. Cooked foods form part of a balanced diet alongside raw foods.

#### How to eat

Mindful eating helps us to digest and absorb what we eat and makes eating more enjoyable. Take time to sit, eat and sayour food.

One of the powerful ways food is able to support health is by creating a sense of pleasure. For this reason, the healthiest diet is one that is stress-free as well as nutrient-rich.

## **Healthy Eating Plate**

Getting the right balance of food on the plate is really important. This gives an idea of proportions and shows the types of foods to include in a typical meal. This may need to be varied, depending on individual circumstances.



## Vegetables, fruit herbs and spices

#### **Vegetables and fruit**

Large numbers of studies show vegetables and fruit help to protect against cancer. They contain many compounds that support health including fibre, vitamins, minerals and plant (phyto) nutrients.

Many phytonutrients have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

**We suggest** 8 -10 daily portions (cupped handfuls) of vegetables and fruit, with two thirds of your intake as vegetables.

Choose more vegetables than fruit in an array of colours, especially broccoli and other green, leafy vegetables.

Also, consider including seaweed, which is a good source of iodine and other minerals, often lacking in the modern diet

#### **Herbs and spices**

Herbs and spices have long been used to support health and are now known to be a rich source of phytonutrients, many with antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. Their inclusion at each meal is recommended.

**We suggest** a variety of fresh and dried herbs and spices are used on a daily basis.

Examples include garlic, ginger, chilli, turmeric, cinnamon, rosemary, mint and thyme.



### **Protein foods**

Protein has many vital roles in the body and may be needed in larger quantities during periods of healing, repair, and when recovering from illness. **Animal produce** is our richest source of protein and includes fish, meat, game, poultry, eggs and dairy.

There is some evidence that a high intake of red meat, particularly if burnt or processed, can increase the risk of certain cancers. However, small quantities of unprocessed red meat are not thought to be a risk factor for cancer. If choosing red meat, eat a variety, and consider including nutrient-rich organ meats such as liver and kidney.

A vegetarian diet that is free from all animal products can provide adequate protein if it includes a wide variety of plant foods, particularly pulses (beans, peas and lentils), nuts and seeds along with some whole grains.

#### **Dairy (milk products)**

For more information on dairy products, see page 23.

**Soya** contains protein and other nutrients including phytoestrogens which may have hormonal benefits for the body. Soya is found in traditional foods such as tofu, miso, tamari and tempeh, as well as the more processed soya products such as soya meat substitutes, milk and yoghurt.



## Foods containing fats

#### **Healthy fats**

Essential to our survival, fats are required for immune health, brain function, hormone production, energy and helping to balance blood sugar levels.

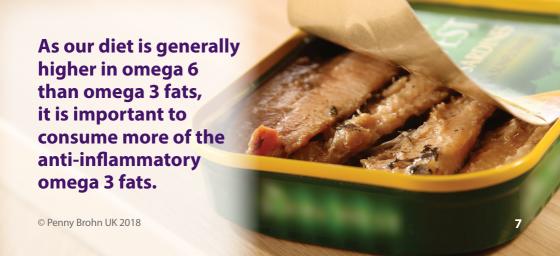
Two essential fats, both polyunsaturated, are particularly important and must be provided by our diet as the body cannot make them. They are:

- Omega 6 fats, found in nuts and seeds, and their oils.
- Omega 3 fats, found in oily fish, ground flaxseeds, walnuts and smaller quantities in grass-fed animal products, as well as eggs and leafy green vegetables.

#### **Cooking with fat**

Polyunsaturated fats (like nut and seed oils) can be easily damaged through exposure to heat and light and should only be used at room temperature in salad dressings etc. The most stable fats to use for cooking are the saturated fats such as butter and coconut oil. Olive oil and avocado oil, which contain a high amount of healthy monounsaturated fats, can also be used for dressings and in cooking but should not be heated to high temperatures.

**We suggest** a small amount of healthy fat is included at each meal.



## Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provide the body with glucose, its main energy source. They can be found in grains, vegetables, fruit and sugar.

Rice (preferably brown), pasta (preferably wholewheat), quinoa and other grains, bread (ideally wholemeal) or potatoes (preferably with skins on).

Whole (unrefined) grains provide us with important nutrients including certain vitamins, minerals and essential fats

Like most plant foods, they are also a good source of fibre, which feeds good bacteria in the gut and may help to maintain a healthy digestive system.

Fibre can act as a bulking agent which stops us eating too much, and can help in the balance of blood sugar.

For those on a gluten-free diet, try using buckwheat, millet and quinoa.





### Water, tea and coffee

#### Water

Every biological, chemical and mechanical activity in the body needs water.

Water can help to improve digestion, energy, skin health and concentration. It is best to drink water regularly throughout the day. Don't wait until you are thirsty before you drink.

**We suggest** 1.5 litres (6 glasses or cups) to 2 litres (8 glasses or cups) of fluid per day. You may need more if you are very physically active or the weather is hot.

For a change, add some lemon or lime slices, halved strawberries and cucumber slices or a handful of mint to water.

Include water, herbal teas and fresh vegetable juices to make up your fluid intake. Keep fruit juice, sugary drinks and alcohol to a minimum.

#### What about tea and coffee?

Caffeine is found in drinks such as tea (black, green and white) and coffee, which can increase the body's production of stress hormones. If under stress or troubled by anxiety, it may help to reduce caffeine-containing drinks.

However, green and white tea, and even black tea and coffee are rich in antioxidants and can have some health benefits. They are fine in moderation, such as one or two cups of coffee or tea per day.

### Foods to avoid

The foods/drinks on these pages have little or no benefit to health and many are known to be harmful. They are best kept to a minimum or avoided completely.

#### **Refined grains and sugars**

Use of refined grains (white bread, rice and pasta) as well as sugars can lead to high blood glucose and high insulin levels. Concentrated fruit juices, alcohol, honey and syrups have a similar impact on blood sugar. These can increase levels of inflammation and insulin in the body and cause weight gain.

We suggest avoiding refined grains and sugary foods and drinks as much as possible. Use whole fruit as the main sweetness in your diet. You can use fresh or dried fruit to make puddings, cakes and biscuits.

#### **Damaged fats**

This can lead to unhealthy changes in the body. They are generally found in over heated oils and heavily processed foods such as crisps, chips, some low fat spreads, cakes, biscuits, pastries and ready meals.

**We suggest** avoiding processed fatty foods as much as possible. Instead prepare cakes, biscuits and pastry products at home. Use healthy unprocessed fats and cook at a low temperature.

## Healthy tip

Cut down on processed foods and ready meals to reduce the risk of eating damaged fats.

#### **Processed meats**

Processed meats have been preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or by the addition of preservatives. Examples include heavily processed burgers and sausages, salami and other smoked or cured meats. Evidence suggests a high intake of these foods can increase the risk of certain cancers.

**We suggest** if eating processed meats or smoked fish, make it no more than once a week.

#### Over-cooked and burnt foods

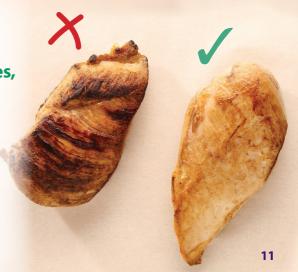
Research evidence indicates that a diet containing large amounts of burnt foods may increase the risk of certain cancers. However, there is less risk to health in eating occasional barbecued or griddled foods, especially if marinated with antioxidant herbs.

#### **Alcohol**

Some alcoholic drinks such as red wine have beneficial compounds with antioxidant activity. However, alcohol itself offers little benefit to the body, apart from its temporary relaxation effects. It can place stress on the liver as well as undermining general health. Research evidence shows that alcohol may increase the risk of certain cancers.

**We suggest** if you choose to drink alcohol, enjoy it in moderation. Try sparkling water with small amounts of juice as an alternative to alcoholic drinks. Keep alcohol for special occasions and celebrations.

We suggest if you are barbecuing: use marinades, cook foods slowly, without close contact to the flame or wrap them in foil. This is particularly important with regards to meat.



# The importance of good digestion

## A healthy digestive system is important because the digestive system interacts with every other system in the body.

Many things can affect digestive health: dietary choices, stress, medicines such as antibiotics, cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy of the abdominal or pelvic area, pain killers and antibiotics may disrupt the healthy bacteria and lining cells of our large intestines, which are needed for good digestion.

The following may help you to reduce digestive problems:

- Be as relaxed as possible when you eat.
- Eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly to assist digestion.

- Include fermented foods such as live yoghurt, sauerkraut and miso paste or take a probiotic supplement.
   They may provide beneficial bacteria to support gut health.
   You may need to avoid these during chemotherapy treatment; ask your medical team for advice.
- Use herbs and spices as teas or in cooking, e.g. fennel, peppermint, ginger, chamomile, caraway, cardamom.
- If digestive problems continue, seek support and advice from a health professional.



## Mindful eating

When we eat mindfully we give our full attention to the food we are eating, noting how it makes us feel.

Here are some ways to eat mindfully and gain the most pleasure and benefit from your food:

- Make your dining area a pleasurable place to be; free from clutter and mess, and with nice lighting, flowers or a lovely view.
- Before your meal, pause for a moment to relax your body, deepen your breathing and reflect on what you are about to eat.
- Once you start to eat, savour every mouthful. As the food interacts with each of your senses – sight, smell, touch, sound and taste – notice any sensations and emotions that arise.
- After your meal, notice any changes in energy, your mood and other aspects of your wellbeing. Keep a note of your response if you wish.
- If you can, make some meals a social occasion to enjoy with friends and family.

You don't have to be with others to celebrate the wonder of food; eating your favourite meal in the peace and quiet of your own company can be very enjoyable.



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# The importance of healthy weight

There is strong evidence that maintaining a healthy weight is very important for all, including those affected by cancer. It is important to seek help from a health professional if you have concerns about your weight.

#### **Carrying excess weight**

Being overweight appears to increase the risk of treatment complications in those with cancer. It may also lower the effectiveness of treatment, raise the chance of the disease progressing or returning and reduce overall survival rates, in some cancers.

Certain types of cancer treatments can lead to weight gain. Also stress, fatigue and pain may reduce your physical activity and also encourage comfort eating.

At times of crisis it can be hard to change regular eating habits, but even small steps can make a positive difference. Following our guidelines and reducing refined carbohydrates, alcohol and sugar may help to avoid weight gain or encourage loss of excess weight.

#### Some helpful tips:

- Eat at a slower pace than you are used to.
- · Reduce snacking.
- Recognise when you are no longer hungry, rather than when your stomach feels full and heavy.
- If you find yourself eating for emotional comfort, explore these emotions in more depth, perhaps with the support of a health professional. Try to find alternative ways to make yourself feel good.
- Use a smaller plate.
- See yourself as just experimenting with eating differently, rather than being on a diet. This makes making changes easier.

#### **Carrying too little weight**

Weight loss may be due to the disease process or the side effects of treatment, such as lack of appetite, nausea or disrupted digestion. If it results in being underweight or having insufficient nutrition, it may weaken resilience. Emotional distress, lack of motivation or pain may also be a cause of weight loss.

If you are losing weight you may need to eat extra calories, particularly healthy fats and some protein. Wherever possible eat a combination of these and try to avoid processed and refined foods as these give calories but with very little nutritional value.



## Some ideas to provide nourishment and encourage weight gain:

- Include high calorie, healthy foods in every meal such as nuts and seeds, avocado, oily fish, olives, eggs, full fat dairy and coconut products.
- Include nutrient-rich homemade smoothies daily, using coconut or full fat milk, ground nuts and seeds, fruit.
- Add butter or olive oil to cooked vegetables.
- If nausea is reducing your desire to eat, try sipping peppermint, fennel or ginger tea.
- Have high calorie snacks to hand at all times such as olives, avocado dip, hummus, nuts and seeds or full fat dairy or coconut yoghurt.
- If your appetite is reduced, try having small portions more frequently as large plates of food can be off-putting.
- If weight loss persists, seek the advice of a health professional experienced in supporting people with cancer.

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## Making dietary changes

Dietary needs can change with time as your health, lifestyle and moods alter. Make changes when you are ready, and because you want to make them.



#### **Step-by-step changes**

It is best to make dietary changes at a pace that suits you. Some ideas for simple first steps:

- Reduce your intake of processed foods.
- Add two extra portions of vegetables to your daily diet.
- Include herbs or spices in your main meal of the day.
- Switch from white bread, pasta and rice to wholegrain, and from potatoes to sweet potatoes.



#### Plan ahead

The better you are at planning, the easier you will find it to change your diet, particularly during the early stages.

- Prepare a menu plan and shopping list at the start of the week.
- Stock your kitchen with basic ingredients.
   Tinned fish can be used for salads, dips and sandwiches. Frozen vegetables and tinned pulses can be used for easy meals when there's no time to cook with fresh ingredients.
- Make extra portions at dinner to use for lunch the next day.
- Cook food in bulk and freeze the extra portions.





#### **Experiment**

Try new foods and recipes. Even if you think you don't like a particular food, you never know until you try!

- Buy some cookbooks that focus on healthy eating.
   You may like to try our cancer cookbook, Nourish.
- Look online for recipes and cooking ideas. You can find recipes on our website – www.pennybrohn.org.uk
- Share ideas with friends and family, and perhaps find a healthy cooking class or demonstration to join.



#### Include treats

Within a truly healthy eating approach there are no such things as forbidden foods.

If you follow the healthy eating guidelines most of the time you will be able to include some occasional treats, whether that is chocolate, chips or a glass of wine.





#### Ask for support

- Encourage those around you to read these guidelines and to try some of the healthy eating ideas for themselves.
- Ask others to cook healthy meals for you so that you can stock up your freezer.
- Shop with a friend or family member, so they can understand what's important for you.

You may need professional help with your nutrition. Seek out this support if you are struggling in any way.

## Easy ways to healthier eating

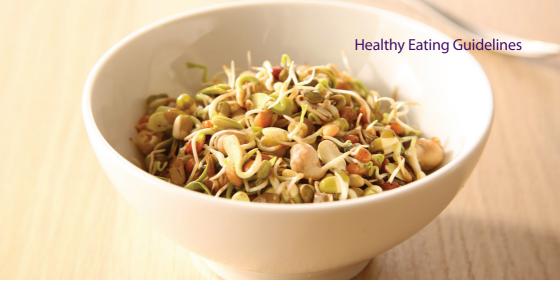
## Increase your use of fresh vegetables and fruit

- When making a sandwich, always add some lettuce, tomato, cucumber or other salad ingredients.
- If having an occasional takeaway, add a small side dish of your own cooked vegetables or a mixed salad.
- Fresh vegetable juices are a great way of boosting nutrient intake.
   Use a variety of vegetables. Lemon or lime can be added, as can fresh ginger and turmeric. Add apple or pomegranate seeds for sweetness.

## Make the most of nuts and seeds

- Grinding seeds helps the body to digest them more completely. Store a combination of ground seeds and nuts in a closed jar in the fridge for up to a week. Add to yoghurt, porridge, smoothies.
- Soaking nuts and seeds helps the body to extract their nutrients.
   Use cold water for several hours before using in salads, smoothies or for snacking.
- To protect delicate oils in nuts and seeds, store in the freezer. They can be used with no defrosting required.





## Improve the benefit of the foods you eat

- Home-grown vegetables are likely to have a higher nutrient content as you can eat them as soon as they are harvested.
- Locally-sourced seasonal foods may be much higher in nutrients than foods transported from a long distance away.
- Sprouted seeds and pulses can increase the availability of the nutrients to the body. You can buy them ready sprouted or have a go yourself.

#### Some tips for healthy cooking

 Boiling vegetables can lead to some loss of vitamins into the water. Use the water for stocks and gravies.

- Fish and chicken can be poached in water, stock or milk. It keeps the flesh moist and the cooking fluid can be used for a sauce.
- Overcooking of vegetables can result in the breakdown and loss of some of the phytonutrients. Steaming is the best option.
- Add water to stir fries to keep temperatures low, and the fat from becoming damaged.

#### Have snacks already prepared

- Bought snacks can be high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats, so make your own.
- Try our recipes for homemade flapjacks, cereal bars, chocolate and beetroot tray bake, muffins, spicy bean and aubergine dip.

## Menu for a day

Here are some meal suggestions to help you plan the week.

## Breakfast

- Plain organic yoghurt with granola, seeds/nuts and berries, stewed or grated apple.
- Porridge (whole oats or brown rice) or muesli with ground seeds/ nuts. Add cinnamon or vanilla for extra flavour.
- Whole grain wheat/spelt/rye bread or toast with butter or coconut fat. Add nut spreads, sesame seed paste (tahini), or baked beans.
- Eggs with mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, spinach.
- Smoothie made with whole milk/ yoghurt, ground nuts/seeds, avocado, berries.



## Lunch

- Homemade vegetable soup thickened with pulses (e.g. beans or lentils) or quinoa.
- Mixed salad to include a wide variety of colourful vegetables (raw and cooked) and a little cheese or sprouted seeds.
- Wholegrain sandwich made with salad and a choice of egg, hummus, guacamole or tinned fish.
- Sardine pâté with oat or rye crackers and vegetable sticks.
- Whole grain (rice, millet, quinoa) salad with added lentils or beans and fresh herbs and vegetables.



### Dinner

- Casserole made with lots of vegetables, and some meat or pulses. Add quinoa if not using meat.
- Roasted beetroot, onion, peppers, cauliflower with a small portion of meat or fish.
- Vegetable omelette or frittata with salad and a few potato wedges.
- Mackerel or salmon baked in the oven over sliced chicory, tomatoes, courgette and crushed garlic or ginger, a little butter and lemon juice. Serve with steamed vegetables.
- Stir fry chicken or tofu with cashew nuts and vegetables.



### Snacks

Healthy snacks are a good way to prevent hunger and dips in blood sugar. Many of the suggestions on these pages can be used as snacks. If appetite is low, it often helps to eat smaller meal portions and add snacks between meals.



## Frequently asked questions

- Q Should I be eating a mainly raw diet?
- A Both cooked and raw foods have benefits. Choices will depend on the season, preparation time and digestion, and it is advisable to have both in the diet.

If raw salads and vegetables are difficult to digest, raw juices (which do not contain fibre) may be an easier way to get essential, concentrated nutrients.

Cooking can break down some of the fibrous and tough material in the outer plant membranes. Homemade soups and broths, stews and casseroles, with lightly cooked vegetables, may be a better choice for those with digestive problems.

- Q How important is it to eat organic foods?
- A wide variety of whole foods, whether organic or not, are more important than limiting your food range. If you are unable to obtain organic vegetables or fruit, adding a little lemon juice or vinegar to washing water may help to remove surface chemicals. Peeling may also help.
- Q Should I take supplements?
  - Foods should always be the main focus when thinking about maximising nutrient intake.
    However, supplements can be useful as a back up if a healthy diet is difficult to achieve.
    For those with difficulty swallowing or digestive problems, they can provide a very important supply of nutrients

It is important to get advice from a registered health professional before taking nutritional or herbal supplements if you are taking any medication.

#### Q Should I eat dairy products?

A Despite the benefits of dairy produce, their suitability for those with certain types of cancer has

with certain types of cancer has been questioned. The best choice will depend on the person and type of cancer.

Chemotherapy may increase the risk of digestive disorders. Some people are intolerant to certain compounds in milk such as lactose, and find dairy foods cause digestive upset. If this is you, we suggest you avoid this group of foods. A dairy-free diet can provide plenty of nutrients to support bone health as long as green leafy vegetables, pulses, nuts and seeds, oily fish with bones and whole grains are eaten regularly.

Some studies show a link between high intakes of dairy (equivalent to more than 1.5 litres of milk daily) and an increased risk of prostate and some other hormonedependent cancers.

On the other hand, some studies show dairy products to be protective against colon cancer. At this stage, research suggests that a moderate intake of dairy foods is not a problem for most people with cancer.

#### Q Should salt be avoided?

Although salt provides the body with essential minerals, many people eat too much which can upset the balance of minerals in the body. Much of the salt people eat is added to processed foods and a natural, whole food diet is generally low in salt.

Herbs and spices, garlic, onions, dried mushrooms, dried tomatoes and lemon or lime juice can be used as alternatives to increase flavour.

## **Summary**

To use daily, in the balance shown in our healthy eating plate.	To use in moderate amounts, if desired (smaller quantities or less regularly).	To avoid, or use in minimal amounts.
Vegetables: to include a colourful range of vegetables, e.g. broccoli, lettuce, cabbage, watercress, sweet potato, carrot.  Fruit: to include berries and citrus fruit.		Fast food and commercial ready meals. They often have high sugar and salt content as well as damaged fats.
Protein: choose from fish, eggs, white meat, game, dairy products, tofu and pulses (beans, peas and lentils).	Lean red meat This can include nutrient- rich organ meat, such as liver and kidneys.	Processed meats
Herbs and spices		Overcooked/burnt foods
<b>Carbohydrate:</b> a small portion of whole grain foods, e.g. brown rice, millet, buckwheat, quinoa, wholemeal bread	Potatoes (increase blood sugar more than most other vegetables)	Refined grains and sugars: white bread and bakery products, white rice and pasta, sweets
Healthy fats and oils  Nuts and seeds		Margarines and other processed fats
Water	Tea, coffee, dark chocolate	Alcohol, sugary drinks

## Where to go from here

## It is important for an individual to find their own combination of nourishing foods as we are all unique.

We all have different nutritional needs, so some personal experimentation is needed to find the foods to suit us.

Eating well is a simple and powerful way to strengthen your body's natural defences against cancer. However, we also know that once you start making changes to how you eat you may also want to consider the benefits of exercise, and how you can reduce stress to help you live well with cancer.

Penny Brohn UK offers a range of services which can help you take more control of your own health and wellbeing, which may reduce the impact of cancer and treatment side effects and improve quality of life.

#### **Research and further information**

If you are interested in reading about the research and reasoning behind our guidelines, visit our website, www.pennybrohn.org.uk

We also have more detailed information sheets available covering some of the more specific issues covered in our guidelines.

#### **Contact us**

For further information about our services please contact us:

Helpline 0303 3000 118 helpline@pennybrohn.org.uk

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Penny Brohn UK is the leading UK charity specialising in a holistic approach to cancer. We support people to live as well as they possibly can with the impacts of cancer, at any stage – before, during and after treatment.

We do this through our pioneering Bristol Whole Life Approach, which offers support for every aspect of a person's life – mind, body, spirit and emotions.

#### For more information about our services please:

**Call our Helpline:** 0303 3000 118

**Email us at:** helpline@pennybrohn.org.uk

Write to: Penny Brohn UK

Chapel Pill Lane Bristol, BS20 0HH

Visit our website at: www.pennybrohn.org.uk

The information in these guidelines is based on the World Cancer Research Fund's report: Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer, and its continuous updates. The lifestyle changes and tips are based on over 3 years' experience of working with people with cancer.

Photography by Richard Meadows and Iris Thorsteinsdottir.

These Healthy Eating Guidelines have been developed by our Lead Nutritional Therapist, Wendy Burley, and her team, and our Senior Clinical Lead, Doctor Catherine Zollman. Updated January 2017. Revision date due 2020. Registered Charity No: 284881

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