

Healthy Recipes for Cancer Patients



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Healthy Recipes for Breast Cancer Patients



When you are battling cancer, it is essential to take care of your body, which includes providing the fuel it needs for healing and recovery through [good nutrition](#). Unfortunately, it's not always easy to know just how to do that.

The purpose of this eBook is to provide recipes that are packed with vitamins and minerals to help optimize your health, both during and long after your battle with cancer. Keep reading for ten simple recipes created by a registered dietitian that you and your family can enjoy that are both delicious and nutritious.

Disclaimer: The recipes in the eBook should serve as a general guide for healthy meals. Please ask your doctor if there are certain foods that you need to avoid due to other medical conditions, allergies, or nutrient interactions with medications you may be taking before making these recipes.

About The Author



Annie Cavalier, MS, RDN, LD

Annie Cavalier is a clinical registered dietitian who works at one of the largest hospitals in Dallas, Texas. She attended the University of Texas at Austin for her bachelor's degree in nutrition and dietetics and received her master's degree in nutrition from Texas Woman's University. Annie's interest in nutrition was sparked when she was 12 years old and her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. With the help of a friend who is a chef, Annie's family learned how to prepare healthy, delicious food that her mother

was able to eat during treatment. Noticing how much of an impact food and nutrition had on overall health and wellbeing, Annie set out to learn more about the science behind food and its relationship to health.

Annie runs her own nutrition and lifestyle website, My Healthful Life, which she plans to grow into a private practice. In addition to writing articles for her own website, Annie has also written for the University of Texas Department of Kinesiology's Fitness Institute of Texas, Southern Dallas Magazine, and more. This is her [second publication](#) with the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

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 My Healthful Life

A Brief Reminder about Food Safety

One of the side effects of many cancer treatments and therapies is a weakened immune system, which not only puts you at greater risk for foodborne illnesses, but also makes it harder to recover from them. Therefore, it is important to keep basic food-safety principles in mind while you are cooking.

Follow these four simple steps to help reduce your risk of foodborne illnesses:

1. **Keep a Clean Environment** - Wash your hands, cooking surfaces, and cooking tools frequently (especially after handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood). Also remember to wash all fruits and vegetables before cooking or eating. This includes things like avocados that have thick skins you peel or slice off! If there is any bacteria on the skin, it can get on your knife as you are slicing and then onto the edible portion.
2. **Separate Raw from Ready-To-Eat** - Always make sure to keep foods that will not be cooked away from raw meats, poultry, seafood, and eggs. It is even best to use separate cutting boards and knives for different types of food to avoid cross contamination of bacteria. Finally, arrange your refrigerator so that meats and seafood are at the bottom and fruit and vegetables are at the top. The recommended way to order your refrigerator from top to bottom is ready-to-eat food, seafood, beef and pork, ground meat, whole and ground poultry.

3. **Cooking Temperatures** – Certain foods are more prone to bacteria than others, and therefore need to be cooked to different minimum temperatures to kill the bacteria. When checking the temperatures of food, make sure that the thermometer is in the thickest part of the meat as it takes these areas longer to get to the proper temperature.

Minimum Safe Internal Temperatures	
Beef, Pork, Lamb, Veal	145°F
Seafood	145°F
Ground Meat	160°F
Poultry (Chicken, Turkey)	165°F

4. **Chill Food** - If you have leftovers, make sure to put them in the refrigerator as soon as you can! Bacteria grows the most rapidly between 41-135°F, otherwise known as the “Danger Zone”. Place leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible to limit bacteria growth.

Danger Zone: 41 – 135° F

Bacteria grow more rapidly within this temperature range. Try to keep your food outside of these temperatures for more than 2 hours at a time or 4 hours in total. Food that has been in the danger zone for longer periods than this should be thrown out.

If you want to learn more about how to protect yourself from foodborne illnesses, take a look at the references at the end of the eBook!

Breakfast



Breakfast

Broccoli and Spinach Quiche with a Sweet Potato Crust



Serves: 4
Prep Time: 30 min
Total Time: 1 hr

This is an excellent recipe that you can make ahead of time and then throw in the microwave to reheat throughout the week. It is packed with nutrients such as calcium (think healthy bones), vitamin A, and more.

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato, peeled
- 8 eggs
- ¼ cup unsweetened almond milk
- 4 cups small broccoli florets (about 1 large head)
- 1 cup spinach, chopped
- 1 shallot, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 ½ tsp extra virgin olive oil, separated
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp crumbled goat cheese (optional)
- Additional topping ideas: sliced avocado, roasted cherry tomatoes, salsa, arugula

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. Slice the sweet potatoes into rounds about ¼ inch wide.
3. Grease a 9-inch round pie dish with ½ tsp olive oil and arrange the sweet potato rounds so that they cover the bottom and sides of the dish. You may need to slice some of the rounds in half in order to line the sides of the dish. Place in the oven to bake for 15 minutes.
4. While the sweet potatoes are in the oven, place the chopped shallots and garlic in a skillet with the remaining olive oil and sauté for 5 minutes or until softened, stirring occasionally.
5. Combine the eggs, almond milk, broccoli florets, spinach, shallots, garlic, salt and pepper in a bowl and whisk together.
6. Once the sweet potatoes are done cooking, pour the egg mixture over the sweet potatoes and sprinkle the goat cheese on top (optional). Return to the oven for 35-40 minutes or until the eggs are set and the top of the quiche is a golden brown. Allow it to cool for a few minutes before serving and add any additional toppings you desire.

Mango, Blueberry, and Spinach Smoothie

Serves: 1

Time: 5 min



This micronutrient-rich recipe is not only delicious, but also provides healthy fats and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Something you may not know is that spinach contains iron, which is an essential component of our red blood cells. However, iron from plant sources is not very readily absorbed in our body. Thankfully, vitamin C, which is found in mango, helps increase the absorption of this plant-based iron.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 cup tightly packed spinach
- ½ cup frozen mango
- ½ cup frozen blueberries
- 1 serving vanilla protein powder (Usually 1-2 scoops depending on the brand – look at the top of the nutrition label)
- 1 Tbsp almond butter

Directions:

Combine all of the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

Banana Pancakes



Serves: 2
Time: 30 min

This is the perfect recipe for when you are wanting something a little bit sweet but still nutritious. One of the reasons I love this recipe is that it is very soft, which makes it easier to eat when you have mouth sores (a common side effect from chemo). You can also add a little bit of protein powder to the batter to bump up the protein content. Toppings such as nut butters are also great options for boosting the protein and calories. Remember, when you have cancer, your calorie and protein needs are elevated.

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup oats
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp vanilla extract
- Butter
- Topping ideas: fruit, maple syrup, peanut butter

Directions:

1. Place the banana, eggs, oats, cinnamon, and vanilla extract in a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Melt butter in a pan until the pan is evenly coated.
3. Pour the batter onto the pan (using 2 Tbsp to ¼ cup batter per pancake depending on what size you want them) and cook on low heat for 30-60 seconds. Use a spatula to push up on the sides, and if it does not feel like it is sticking to the pan, flip it over and repeat on the other side.
4. Serve hot with your choice of toppings.

Entrées



Entrées

Black Bean Soup



Serves: 6

Prep Time: 15 min

Total Time: 40 min

Soup is one of the best things to eat if you are struggling with mouth sores because it does not require as much chewing. I also love this recipe because it provides a lot of fiber, a nutrient that most people do not get nearly enough of.

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 Tbsp cumin
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp chili powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 4 (15 oz) cans black beans, drained and rinsed
- 4 cups (32 oz) low sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- Topping ideas: avocado, cilantro, queso fresco or sour cream

Directions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large pot on medium heat and add the carrots and onion. Cook for 5-10 minutes or until the onion becomes translucent, stirring occasionally.
2. Add the garlic, tomatoes, cumin, oregano, chili powder and salt. Stir well.
3. Pour the black beans and broth into the pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and allow it to cook uncovered for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Transfer half of the mixture to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the blended mixture to the pot and stir to combine.
5. Top with avocado, cilantro, and queso fresco or sour cream if desired.

Sweet Potato, Kale, and Lentil Soup

Serves: 6

Prep Time: 15 min

Total Time: 50 min



This is one of my favorite veggie-packed fall soups that could easily be enjoyed year-round. Because it is a bit of a lighter dish, it is also a great option for if your appetite is a little lower than normal but you still want to get some nutrients in.

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp cumin
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground coriander
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp chili powder
- 6 cups (48 oz) low sodium chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups dried lentils, rinsed
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 bunch of kale, chopped and stems removed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- Chopped parsley, optional

Directions:

1. Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil for about 2 minutes in a large pot on medium heat, stirring occasionally. Add the cumin, coriander, turmeric, and chili powder, and cook for another 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
2. Add the chicken or vegetable stock, lentils, sweet potato, and salt and bring to a boil. Then cover the pot and reduce to a simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Add the kale, stirring it until wilted, and cook for five minutes.
4. Serve hot with the chopped parsley as a garnish if you desire.

Chickpea and Veggie Curry



Serves: 6

Prep Time: 45 min

Total Time: 1 hr 15 min

Cancer therapies can often make you lose your sense of taste, so it is best to try foods that are packed with flavor to give you the best chance of tasting it well, and this recipe is a great option for that. Chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, are an excellent source of protein. Of note, this may not be the best recipe for you to try during times when you are experiencing mouth sores due to the acidity of the bell peppers and variety of spices.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dried brown rice
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 cup cauliflower florets (about 1/3 of a large head)
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 tsp cumin
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ cup red curry paste
- 2 (15 oz) cans garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 ½ cups unsweetened almond milk
- Chopped cilantro, optional

Directions:

1. Place the olive oil, onion, bell peppers, carrots, and cauliflower in a large saucepan and sauté on medium heat for 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Add the garlic, ginger, coriander, cumin, salt, and curry paste, and continue cooking for 2-3 minutes.
3. Add the garbanzo beans and almond milk and bring to a simmer. Allow it to simmer uncovered for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. While the garbanzo beans are cooking, bring 2 cups of water to a boil and add the brown rice. Simmer with the lid on for about 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Plate the garbanzo beans and brown rice and top with cilantro if desired.

Broccoli Pesto Pasta

Serves: 4

Time: 30 min



This recipe is a simple twist on the classic pesto pasta, but it sneaks in some extra veggies to provide more nutrients. It also contains nutritional yeast, which is packed with B vitamins, trace minerals, and is a complete protein (meaning it contains all nine of the essential amino acids that we need to obtain from our diet). You can find nutritional yeast online or at most health-food stores. I recommend making this recipe with a legume-based pasta (lentils, beans, chickpeas, etc) for extra protein, but you can absolutely make it with a regular wheat pasta. You can also add grilled chicken or shrimp for even more protein.

Ingredients:

- 1 large head of broccoli, chopped into florets (about 4 cups)
- 1 cup fresh basil
- 1/3 cup walnuts
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast powder
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp filtered water
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 2 cups (8 oz) lentil pasta

Directions:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add the broccoli. Cook for 6-8 minutes or until you can easily put a fork through the broccoli. Use a slotted spoon to remove the broccoli from the water.
2. Add the cooked broccoli, basil, walnuts, garlic, nutritional yeast, olive oil, water, salt, and pepper to a food processor and blend until it has reached the desired consistency.
3. Cook the pasta in the boiling water until soft and then drain.
4. Mix the pasta and pesto in a large bowl. If desired, drizzle on some more olive oil and cracked pepper, then serve.

Toasted Kale and Quinoa Bowl

Serves: 2
Prep Time: 15 min
Total Time: 30 min



Many cancer patients complain that they are not able to tolerate salads because the vegetables are too tough on their mouth sores. Cooking your greens is a great way to get around this because it softens the fibers in the vegetables, makes them easier to chew, and takes out the bitterness (in kale especially) that many people don't like. As always, you should try to have a protein with all of your meals, so make sure to add your choice of hard-boiled eggs, grilled chicken, shrimp, fish, a lean cut of steak, or whatever else you might prefer.

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup white quinoa
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil, separated
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp hulled, unsalted pumpkin seeds
- 2 Tbsp unsalted sunflower seeds
- 1/4 cup almonds, roughly chopped
- 1 bunch of kale, torn into bite size pieces with the stalk removed
- 3 Tbsp halloumi cheese, chopped or crumbled
- 2 heaped tsp hummus
- 1 avocado, sliced, pitted, and peeled
- Chili powder to taste
- Protein of your choice

Directions:

1. Add the quinoa and salt to a small saucepan with 2/3 cups water and cook on medium heat. Bring the water to a boil, stirring occasionally, then cover with a lid and reduce to a simmer until the quinoa has absorbed all of the water.
2. In a large skillet, sauté the garlic in 1 ¼ tsp olive oil until slightly browned, stirring constantly. Add the pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and almonds and cook for one minute, stirring occasionally. Now add the cooked quinoa, and then add ½ tsp olive oil and the kale, stirring until slightly wilted and it turns a brighter green (about 2-3 minutes).
3. Move the kale and quinoa mixture to two serving bowls and sauté the halloumi cheese in ¼ tsp olive oil in the skillet until browned. Add to the serving bowls.
4. Add 1 heaping tsp of hummus, an avocado slice, and your choice of protein to each bowl. Sprinkle on chili powder to taste.

Snacks



Snacks

Peanut Butter, Banana, and Cinnamon Rice Cakes



Serves: 1
Time: 5 min

This is one of my favorite snacks because it is easy to put together, delicious, and full of nutrients. It combines a plant-based protein with healthy fat, a complex carbohydrate, and fruit! You can also make this recipe with your choice of bread instead of the rice cake if you have mouth sores and can't tolerate the rice cakes.

Ingredients:

- 1 brown rice cake
- 2 Tbsp peanut butter
- ½ banana
- Dash of cinnamon

Directions

1. Spread the peanut butter on the rice cake.
2. Slice the banana into thin coins and spread them out on the rice cake. Sprinkle with the cinnamon and serve.

Crunchy Paprika Chickpeas



Serves: 2

Prep Time: 5 min

Total Time: 35 min

I love chickpeas (aka garbanzo beans) because they provide a lot of energy and protein. This recipe makes a great snack to bring with you on the go, and it will stay good in an airtight container for 3-5 days. If you want them a little softer and not very crunchy, just cut back a little on the cooking time.

Ingredients:

- 1 (15 oz) can garbanzo beans
- 1 ½ Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ¾ tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp pepper

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Drain and rinse the chickpeas in a colander. Lay the chickpeas out between two layers of clean paper towels and rub them with medium pressure until dry. It's important for them to be as dry as possible for them to get crispy in the oven.
3. Mix the chickpeas, olive oil, and salt in a bowl, then spread them out on a parchment paper lined baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Remove the chickpeas from the oven and sprinkle the smoked paprika, garlic powder, and pepper over them and stir until evenly coated. Return to the oven and bake for 5-8 minutes or until crunchy.

Additional Food Safety Resources

Here are some additional resources if you want to learn more about food safety and minimizing your risk for foodborne illnesses:

American Cancer Society

<https://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/staying-active/nutrition/weak-immune-system.html>

Food Safety for People with Cancer

<https://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk7366/files/inline-files/26450.pdf>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>

Food Safety – Government Tips

<https://www.foodsafety.gov>

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Food Safety

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety>

Partnership for Food Safety Education

<https://www.fightbac.org>