

11. Indigestion

Most indigestion is related to diet, so it is important to avoid eating lots of fatty, rich or processed foods. Indigestion can sometimes be a symptom of stomach and oesophageal cancers, but it is more often caused by other factors not related to the cancer itself. Steroids and many cancer treatments including radiotherapy and chemotherapy may irritate the stomach causing indigestion. There may be a pre-existing condition, such as a hiatus hernia, causing the indigestion. Other factors include having a small stomach, over production of stomach acid, not moving around enough, heightened anxiety (e.g. irritable bowel syndrome) and eating and drinking too much.

How can I manage my indigestion?

- Most indigestion is related to diet and can be easily treated. It is important to avoid eating lots of fatty, rich or processed foods.
- Eating small, regular meals (every 3-4 hours) and snacks, rather than 3 big meals a day is often helpful.
- Avoid drinking large volumes at mealtimes.
- Keeping a diary can be useful to identify if you suffer from indigestion at any particular times of the day or if there is a particular trigger.
- A small amount of activity can help (i.e. taking a short walk) but try to limit activity and remain upright for 20-30 minutes after a meal.
- Simple antacid medicines, or proton-pump inhibitors can be prescribed by your doctor to help relieve symptoms.
- Stress and anxiety can increase the likelihood of suffering with indigestion. Relaxation methods can be helpful (see section on worry, fear or anxiety elsewhere in this directory).
- If this is a persistent problem causing distress, speak to a dietician. A dietician may be able to help by advising you on your diet.
- Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can help to limit or resolve indigestion.

Local Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
Mustard Tree Cancer Support & Triangle Drop In Centres Ask questions, share concerns, offers a range of services including benefits advice. Support, advice and information for cancer patients and their carers	Mustard Tree, Derriford Hospital: Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm 01752 430060/01752 431468 Kingsbridge: Tuesdays 10am to 4pm 01548 852349 Liskeard: Thursdays 10am to 4pm 01579 373500 Tavistock: Fridays 10am to 4pm 01822 615935
Wiltshire Farm Foods Large selection of frozen meals can be ordered (online or telephone) and delivered straight to your front door	Wiltshire Farm Foods Website: www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) Tel: 0800 0663366
Oakhouse Foods Meals and groceries that can be ordered online or over the telephone and delivered directly to your door	Oakhouse Foods Website: www.oakhousefoods.co.uk Tel: 0333 3702514
Other Resources	Your GP, Oncology Doctor, Specialist Nurse, District Nurse or Dietician.

National Resources:

Resource	Contact details
NHS Choices For general information on healthy eating	http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx
Oesophageal Patients Association For patients, their carers and family affected by oesophageal cancers	www.opa.org.uk/
National Cancer Institute American website offering eating hints for cancer patients before, during and after treatment	www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/eatinghints
British Nutrition Foundation For general information on healthy eating	www.nutrition.org.uk
Penny Brohn Cancer Care Offers complimentary approaches and self-help techniques including the "Bristol approach" for living with cancer including their approach to diet	www.pennybrohncancercare.org
Macmillan Cancer Support Provide comprehensive advice and information on all aspects of cancer.	www.macmillan.org.uk 0808 808 0000 (Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm)

Further information:

Macmillan Cancer Support booklets: – available free from the hospital information service
Recipes for people affected by cancer
Healthy Eating and Cancer
How are you feeling?
Understanding chemotherapy
Understanding radiotherapy
Eating problems and cancer