

Cancer Organisation Websites: Dietary & Nutritional Advice for Symptom Management

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Background

- Symptoms affecting nutrition common in cancer
- Cancer patients not routinely referred to dietitian
- May seek nutritional advice from alternative sources
- National Cancer Organisations (NCO) offer dietary & nutritional advice for common cancer symptoms

Aims

- Examine accessibility and relevance of advice for symptom control management on NCO websites

Methods

- English language NCO websites were identified through web search
- Dietary & nutritional advice for 8 common nutrition-impact symptoms extracted (Fig. 1)
- Ease of access and relevance of advice evaluated

Symptoms Examined	
Dry Mouth	Taste Disturbance
Constipation	Diarrhoea
Anorexia	Nausea & Vomiting
Sore Mouth	Dysphagia

Fig. 1

Results

- 9 NCO websites searched (Fig. 2)
- All offered:
 - general healthy eating guidelines
 - recommended healthcare professional input
- Common dietary advice given for:
 - anorexia (small frequent meals)
 - constipation (increase fluids & fibre)
 - dysphagia (soft foods)
 - nausea & vomiting (small frequent meals)
- ↑ Calorie and ↑ Protein intake recommended for anorexia, dysphagia and sore mouth. Examples of food and recipes included but no website defined the diets (i.e. grams/day per macronutrient)
- No micronutrient advice except ↑ Na & K for diarrhoea
- Little/no advice for early satiety and smell disturbances
- Website navigation varied; difficult to extract information



Fig. 2

Conclusions

1. Referral to dietitian or healthcare professional for guidance recommended by all NCOs
2. Practical dietary advice for common symptoms. Other symptoms not addressed
3. High-calorie, high-protein diets recommended for some symptoms but advice non-specific
4. Website navigation challenging and negatively impacted information access