

Managing your weight during treatment for early breast cancer

Information for patients at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

It is important to monitor your weight during and after your treatment for cancer. During treatment many people find that they gain weight. This may be due to a number of reasons such as: changes in hormone levels, increased appetite, emotional eating and reduced physical activity levels.

Keeping a healthy weight will help to reduce your risk of cancer recurrence, improve your recovery after treatment and help to prevent diabetes and heart disease.

Do I need to see a dietitian?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a way of measuring if you are a healthy weight for your height. Use the colour chart to check your BMI. Ask a member of your treatment team to refer you to a dietitian if:

- your BMI is 30 or more or
- you have gained weight during treatment and would like support to lose this

The Healthy Balance Clinic is a dietetic led clinic which offers advice to help support healthy eating and lifestyle changes. The clinic appointments are flexible and are available both during and after treatment.

What can I do to manage my weight?

- be as active as possible
- follow a healthy balanced diet

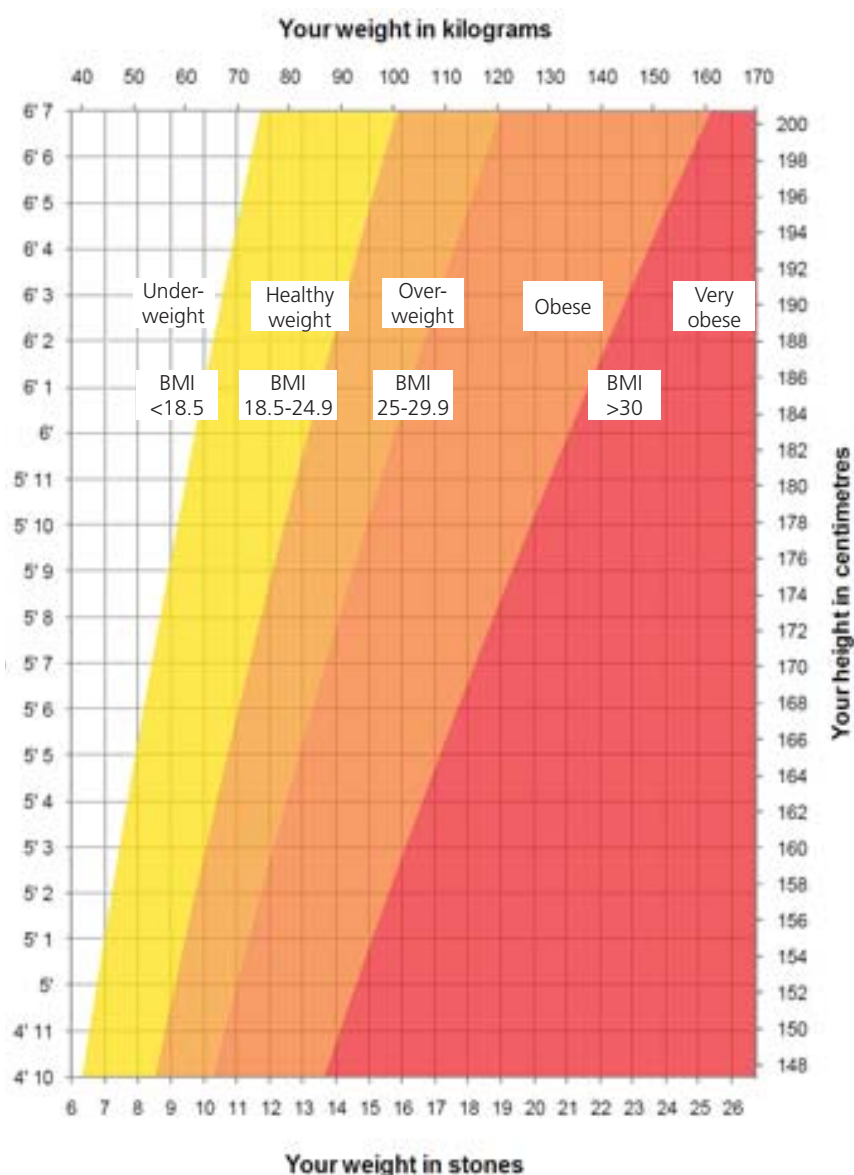
Be as active as possible

Exercise can help with managing your weight and bone health. It has also been shown to reduce fatigue.

You can find tips to help you build gentle exercise into your daily routine on the following websites:

- www.breastcancer.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk/livewell/fitness/pages/fitnesshome.aspx
- www.macmillan.org.uk

If you would like to see a physiotherapist for advice about exercise, please ask a member of your treatment team to refer you.



Follow a healthy, balanced diet

Fruit and vegetables can help you to feel full without adding too many calories. Aim to have five portions of different fruits and vegetables each day - fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juices, all count towards your five portions.

Include slow release carbohydrates at each meal eg, porridge oats, wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholegrain or seeded bread, basmati or brown rice, potatoes or wholewheat pasta.

Choose lean sources of protein eg, chicken, turkey, oily fish, eggs, beans and pulses. Try to limit the amount of red meat you eat. Aim for one to two portions of oily fish per week to obtain healthy omega 3 fats.

Keep to moderate portion sizes. A rough guide for a healthy sized meal would be:

- one fist-sized portion of carbohydrates e.g. potatoes, rice or pasta
- one palm-sized portion of protein e.g. lean meat or fish
- a generous serving of vegetables or salad

Try to have three portions of dairy each day to meet your calcium requirements. A portion is a small pot of yogurt, 1/3 pint of milk, a matchbox size of cheese. Choose reduced fat versions where possible, eg, skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, low fat yoghurt, reduced fat cheese.

Try to reduce your intake of sugar by avoiding sweets, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, high sugar cereals and sugary drinks. Good alternatives include fruit, low calorie hot chocolate, low sugar cereals.

Limit your overall fat intake by trimming fat from your meat and reducing the amount of butter, cream, cheese and oils in your diet. Try to use healthier cooking methods such as steaming, poaching, boiling and dry roasting instead of frying.

Try to drink two-three litres of fluid a day eg, water, herbal tea, sugar free squash or tea and coffee without sugar. It is important to drink enough fluids, as dehydration can make fatigue worse and can be mistaken for hunger.

Special diets

Do not follow diets that exclude whole food groups. There is no scientific evidence to support them and you may be at risk of developing a nutrient deficiency.

If you have any dietary restrictions you may wish to discuss these with a member of your treatment team.

If you would like further advice please contact the **Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Dietitian, tel: 020 3826 2129.**

