

A person with visible tattoos on their left arm is holding a stack of three dark chocolate cookies studded with almonds. The person is wearing a blue apron and holding a cane in their right hand. In the foreground, more of these cookies are arranged on a wooden surface, some on a piece of parchment paper.

Cooking for Chemo

A cooking and
nutrition book to
help you during
treatment

Leukaemia
Foundation®

1800 620 420 leukaemia.org.au

Welcome to Cooking for Chemo

The Leukaemia Foundation's Cooking for Chemo book gives blood cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and their carers new ideas for eating well during treatment. Easy, tasty, nutritious recipes have been selected to suit altered appetites, tastes, and lifestyles.

Nutrition at diagnosis

Using food, vitamins, and other supplements to fight cancer.

When you are first diagnosed, you have a great deal to cope with, both emotionally and physically. The shock of the diagnosis may affect your appetite and oral intake.

Eating well before your treatment begins can help to give you more energy and strength to cope with treatment. However, this is not always possible, as treatment sometimes needs to begin soon after diagnosis.

There is little evidence that any specific food, vitamins, or supplements can cure blood cancers or disorders. However, there is evidence that a nutritious diet helps your body cope better with the effects of cancer and treatment.

It is important to talk to your treatment team before making any major changes to the foods you eat or taking supplements (for example, vitamins, minerals, herbal preparations, or protein drinks). Some alternative diets may interfere with your medical treatment. Dietitians and doctors are the most qualified people to provide nutrition advice.

Why is eating well important?

Good nutrition is important in life to provide our bodies with the right fuel to stay well.

Healthy eating is important for people living with blood cancers. These diseases and their treatments increase the physical and mental demands on the body.

Eating nutritious foods before, during and after treatment can help:

- Prevent unplanned muscle and weight loss
- Cope better with the side effects of cancer and treatment
- Maintain energy levels and prevent fatigue
- Fight infection by boosting your immune system
- Promote healing and repair after treatment
- Being actively involved in your treatment
- Improve your sense of wellbeing and quality of life

Our Blood Cancer Support Coordinators are available to help you with free educational information, emotional and practical support. Contact us on 1800 620 420.

Food safety

Blood cancers and their treatment can affect your immune system and make you more susceptible to infection.

Ensure you always follow appropriate food safety guidelines when preparing, cooking, serving, and storing food.

- Food should always be cooked all the way through
- If reheating, food should be piping hot
- Fruits, vegetables and grains should be well washed prior to preparing your meals
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before handling food
- Clean all surfaces and equipment thoroughly before preparing food

Patients who have lower platelet counts or who are neutropenic should be especially careful with certain foods and food storage and should follow the dietary guidelines provided through their treatment centres. Consult your treatment team for further information.

Foreword on the Chef Jason Roberts

Jason Roberts is an internationally known chef, author, television personality, brand ambassador, fitness enthusiast, and gluten-free lifestyle advocate.

A native of New Zealand, Jason discovered his passion for food at a young age. Turning it into a career, he spent seven years as an Executive Chef at Bistro Moncur in Sydney, Australia, where he was immersed in the traditions and techniques of Classical French cuisine. He became the host of Channel 9's cooking program, *Fresh*, which aired five days a week in Australia and New Zealand.

Jason is the author of three cookbooks, including *Elements*, *Graze: Lots of Little Meals Fast*, and his most recent cookbook, *Good Food—Fast!*, which features easy-to-prepare recipes that are all gluten-free, delicious, and highly nutritious.

Jason Roberts, a dedicated champion of the Leukaemia Foundation, embraced the cause after he learned of a friend's child's battle with blood cancer.

Since then, he has become a committed blood cancer advocate, sharing our goal to save lives from blood cancer by extending his support through various culinary initiatives, including events, cooking demonstrations, and webinars for our community.



Giant green smoothie

Ingredients

- 1 cup of full cream milk
- 1 cup of spinach leaves
- ½ cup of mint leaves
- ½ an avocado
- ½ cup of full cream yoghurt
- ½ an apple, core removed
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 scoop of vanilla whey protein powder (about 20g)

Method

Place all ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth. Serve immediately.

Blueberry smoothie

Ingredients

- 1 frozen banana, skin removed
- 1 cup of blueberries
- 1 cup of full cream milk
- ½ cup of full cream yoghurt
- ½ tsp of ground ginger
- 1 tsp of chia seeds

Method

Place all ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth. Serve immediately.





Espresso chocolate brownie bar

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups of pitted, whole dates
- 2 tbsp of chia seeds, hydrated in ⅓ cup of water
- 2 tbsp of ground coffee (alternatively, use instant coffee granules)
- 1 ½ cups of raw almonds
- 1 cup of raw walnuts
- ⅓ cup of chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp of unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 tbsp of protein powder (whey or plant-based for a vegan option)
- ¼ tsp of sea salt flakes
- ⅔ cup extra virgin olive oil

Method

Blend all ingredients in a food processor for 30 to 40 seconds until the mixture starts to ball up. Press the mixture firmly into a brownie pan.

Refrigerate for an hour (or until firm) before slicing into finger-sized bars. Best kept refrigerated in an airtight container.

Mandarin & almond cake

Ingredients

250g washed mandarins, skin on (seedless is best)
1/3 cup of orange juice (or lime juice)
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 tbsp of sugar for dusting
5 large eggs
500g ground almonds
250g of sugar
1 tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt
Natural or Greek yoghurt to serve

Method

Remove as many seeds from the mandarins as possible and roughly chop, keeping the skin on.

Preheat the oven to 190C/375 F. Oil baking tins evenly with a pastry brush and dust with sugar to create a non-stick coating.

Place the mandarins, orange juice and eggs into the food processor or a blender and puree until smooth. In a separate bowl, mix the almond meal, sugar, baking powder and salt. Whisk in the mandarin mixture into the almond mixture until well combined. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.

Place into the oven and bake for approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Allow to cook, and serve dusted with powdered sugar and a helping of natural yoghurt.

Note: because this is a dense cake, cooking time may vary. The best way to test for “doneness” is to push a skewer in, and when pulled out, it should be relatively cake-free.



Chicken soup with turmeric & lentils

Ingredients

6 cups good quality chicken stock
4 chicken drumsticks
2 tbsp olive oil
1½ cups green lentils
1 x 1½ inch cube of ginger, peeled and finely sliced
1 x 1 inch piece of fresh turmeric peeled and finely sliced (or 1 level tsp of dried)
1 lemon
1 large zucchini
8 baby turnips, stalk and leaves intact (optional)
Salt and pepper

Method

In a medium saucepan over moderate heat, bring the chicken stock, plus 1 cup of water, drumsticks, olive oil and lentils, to a rolling boil, reduce the heat and simmer till liquid has reduced by a third. Approximately 35 – 40 minutes.

Allow to cool. Remove skin and bone from the chicken drumsticks, feather the meat and return to soup; season with salt and pepper. Add the turmeric and ginger to the soup and return to a boil; add in the turnips, split in half, leaves included.

Pass the zucchini through a vegetable spiralizer set on a spaghetti setting, place the zucchini noodles into a bowl and season with salt and lemon juice.

Distribute zucchini between 4 bowls, ladle over hot chicken soup and serve.

Sesame & garlic brown rice

Ingredients

2¾ cup water
1 cup brown rice
2 cloves garlic sliced
½ tsp of salt
2 tsp toasted sesame seeds
1 tsp sesame oil

Method

In a saucepan over high heat, bring the water to a boil.

Add the rice, garlic and salt, stir once, reduce the heat to low, cover and cook, without stirring, until all of the water has been absorbed and the rice is tender, 35 to 45 minutes.

Remove the lid, stir in the sesame oil and top with toasted sesame seeds.



Quick braised chicken & mushrooms

Ingredients

8 chicken thighs, bone in, skin on, seasoned with salt and pepper
Sea salt flakes
3 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, diced
2 celery stalks, diced
5 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
1 tin of crushed tomatoes (440g)
2 tbsp of plain flour
500ml rich chicken stock
7 sprigs of thyme
250g small button mushrooms, stalks trimmed
¼ cup finely chopped curly-leaf parsley

Method

Heat olive oil in the base of your electric pressure cooker.

Add seasoned chicken and brown in batches (2-3 minutes on each side, be mindful not to overcrowd the pan). Transfer the chicken to a plate.

Add the onion, carrot, celery, garlic and tomato to the pot. Saute over heat until the onion is translucent (6-8 minutes). Sprinkle flour over the vegetables and stir continuously, scraping the base so the roux cooks evenly. Stir until it starts to colour (2-4 minutes).

Add a good slosh of stock to deglaze the pan, scraping the base and stirring to form a smooth, thick sauce.

Return the chicken to the pan, adding the remaining stock, mushrooms and thyme. Cover directly with the lid and lock into place. Set a timer for 15 minutes. Once the timer alarms, allow a few additional minutes before releasing the steam.

Remove the lid. Add in chopped parsley and adjust the seasoning to taste.

Note: every pressure cooker is different, so cooking times may vary. Some brands offer preset timings so be sure to click through the presets first to offer guidance on cooking time.

Salmon in a bag with a warm zucchini & mint salad

Ingredients

2 x 180g pieces of salmon

6 small potatoes steamed and skin removed and sliced into 1 cm rounds.

3 tbsp chopped green shallots

3 tbsp olive oil

1 lemon — cut 2 slices, the remaining used for its juice

4 sprigs of fresh thyme

Sea salt

Ground white pepper

1 cup of fresh mint leaves

1 large green zucchini, finely sliced or spiralized and lightly salted

1 lemon cut into wedges

½ bunch chives, finely sliced

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

Make sure the fish is trimmed of fat, pin-boned and free of scales.

Take two pieces of baking paper about 30cm in length and lay them flat on the bench. In the centre of each piece of paper lay the steamed potato slices and a sprinkling of the green shallots. Season with a little olive oil, salt and pepper and then top with a piece of salmon.

Squeeze over a touch of lemon juice along with a little more of the olive oil, season with salt and pepper, top with a slice of lemon and two sprigs of fresh thyme and seal the parcel. Take the edge of baking paper closest to you as well as the opposite edge, bring together above the fish and fold downwards, creating a tight pleat; fold the ends to the left and right back under the fish, creating a snug little parcel.

Place fish parcel onto a heatproof tray, and then put into the preheated oven, for approximately 8 minutes or until cooked to your liking. The best way to test is to pierce with a sharp skewer; you are looking for almost no resistance.

Heat a medium-sized pan over moderate heat with a little olive oil. Add in the zucchini along with the mint leaves and a scattering of the chives, season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Once the fish is cooked, remove it from the oven and allow it to rest for a minute or two before opening the parcel.

To serve, tear the parcel open, divide the warm zucchini and mint salad evenly, and place on top of each piece of fish. It is not necessary to remove the fish from the paper bag.



Contact us

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