

Sharing *Knowledge*

ANSWERS TO YOUR HEALTHY EATING QUESTIONS

The Fall, 2005 issue of the *MessageLine* contained an article titled “Eating to Fight Your Tumor.” Here are the most commonly asked questions we received about that article, and Ms. Ratterman’s responses.



Anita Ratterman,
RD, LDN

Our physician’s suggestion to “take a multivitamin a day” seems broad. Aren’t there specific vitamin supplements that would be particularly helpful to someone with a brain tumor?

I agree with your doctor’s recommendation to take a multivitamin each day. Supplementation may be very individual depending on tumor type and stage, type of treatment and personal characteristics. However, during treatment, a one-a-day type of supplement which provides 100% of the RDA (recommended daily allowance) of vitamins and minerals is appropriate. If you are determined to use supplements, do so under the guidance of a licensed nutrition professional and with the knowledge of your physician. A professional can guide you through herb/vitamin interactions, dosing, contraindications, and potential side effects. Find a licensed dietitian at your local cancer center, or through the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org.

How do you select a quality vitamin product?

When choosing a vitamin, choose a supplement with a “USP” notation on the label. The United States Pharmacopeia (USP) is the official standards-setting authority for all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements, and other healthcare products manufactured and sold in the United States. USP’s standards are also recognized, and used, in many other coun-

tries outside the United States. For the consumer, purchasing a USP-labeled product means the product was tested to insure it will actually disintegrate in your gastrointestinal tract and insure the substances/quantities indicated on the label are actually in the product.

Also, remember to check the product expiration dates. Stores will sometimes offer sales on vitamins that are close to the expiration date. Purchase only the quantity you can use prior to its expiration.

An extra tip — for best absorption, take your vitamin and mineral supplement with a meal that contains some fat.

We’ve heard that people with cancer should stop eating sugar because it feeds the tumor. Is this true?

When you eat sugar, your blood sugar rises rapidly. Your body responds by releasing a hormone, called insulin, whose job is to bring your blood sugar back to a normal range. Animal studies have shown that when insulin levels are high, precancerous cells can gobble up sugar and this may accelerate their growth. High sugar diets can also impact the immune system by stunting the production of white blood cells. This may make the immune system more vulnerable.

It is, however, almost impossible to eliminate ALL sugar from your diet. A more sensible approach is to adjust your diet to emphasize complex carbohydrates, fiber, adequate protein and essential fatty-acids while limiting sweets and



processed foods. Regulating your blood sugar levels may be the key to protecting the immune system and limiting the growth of potential cancer cells.

Do artificial sweeteners cause brain tumors?

There is no scientific evidence to support the belief that artificial sweeteners cause brain tumors. As was discussed at ABTA's Sharing Hope meeting last July, the incidence of brain tumors has not increased in this country proportionate to the considerable growth in the use of artificial sweeteners.

Do you have any tips for handling the weight gain caused by steroids?

While limiting weight gain caused by steroids may be difficult, there are some things you can

do. When the urge to snack attacks, make good choices. Go for fresh fruit, vegetables and lowfat dip or humus, whole grain crackers or bagels. Avoid snacking on high sugar foods which could aggravate blood sugar levels. You may need to eat smaller portions at meals to allow for snacks. Also, limiting salt or sodium intake may help lessen fluid retention. (However, do not limit *fluid* intake unless instructed by your physician.) If possible, maintain regular activity or exercise.

We thank Anita Ratterman, RD, LDN, Northwest Community Hospital, Arlington Heights, Illinois, for responding to our readers' questions as well as for her original article, Eating to Fight Your Tumor. If you would like a copy of that article, please call us at 800-886-2282.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND AT WWW.ABTA.ORG

Families with healthcare questions cannot wait for answers. Our web site, www.abta.org, is designed with you in mind. Whether you need immediate information in the middle of the night, or are able to set aside a few precious hours for research, we provide answers quickly.

At www.abta.org, you'll find information about:

100+ different types of brain tumors

Symptoms

Causes & Risk Factors

Surgery, Radiation Therapy, and
Chemotherapy

New Trends and New Treatments

Brain Tumor Clinical Trials

Steroids

Seizures

Support Options

Online Support Resources

Memory Retraining

Rehabilitation Services

Eating to Fight Your Tumor

Caregiver Resources

Patient & Family Stories

Connections & Bridges

Pen Pal Programs

ABTA Events

Patient & Family Meetings

Brain Tumor Awareness Week

Donation/Tribute Instructions

Register at the site (simply provide your e-mail address and zip code), and you'll also receive brain tumor news and support updates automatically via e-mail.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA). At the top, there is a navigation bar with a search box and a 'Submit' button. Below the search bar, the ABTA logo is displayed, featuring a stylized figure with arms raised. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, there is a 'MENU' sidebar with links to 'ABOUT US', 'CARE & SUPPORT', 'TUMOR INFORMATION', 'RESEARCH AWARDS', 'DONATE', 'FOR PROFESSIONALS', 'NEWS', 'MEETINGS CALENDAR', 'EVENTS CALENDAR', 'SEARCH', and 'CONTACT US'. The main content area starts with a 'Welcome...' message, followed by a 'MY PROFILE' section with links to 'EVENTS', 'ARTICLE', and 'ARTICLE'. Below this, there are several images and text blocks, including a 'Tampa Regional Meeting' announcement and a 'Path in Progress 3K Walk' announcement. At the bottom, there is a footer with contact information: '2720 River Road, Des Plaines, IL 60018 TEL: 800.886.2282 FAX: 847.857.9918 Email Us'. There is also a 'OUR SPONSORS' section with a logo for 'CONVIO'.