

## **Integrating nutritional supplements into cancer treatment plans**

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Cancer is probably on the top ten lists of “scariest” words anyone can hear from their physician. A diagnosis of cancer can be very overwhelming. Often patients ask “why me” or “what did I do” and want to instantly change their lifestyle and habits to be “healthier”. This admirable and in general a good plan but there are some precautions to consider to avoid interference with the efficacy of the medications that will be used to treat the cancer. In the past year, I have had multiple questions about what is safe to take with chemotherapy. This blog will go over safely integrating Advocare products into chemotherapy treatment plans. These are general recommendations; individuals should always discuss the use of supplements with their cancer care medical team.

Most chemotherapy medications can take significant toll on body. Although there are multiple medications used to help to minimize the side effects, there is nothing to help the general “wear and tear” experienced after multiple cycles of chemotherapy. One contributing factor is the appetite is poor during chemotherapy so patients are not getting their nutritional needs met. One of the first things I recommend is to start a good multivitamin such as CorePlex or CorePlex with Iron. Taking the recommended three tablets once a day will help restore body stores. Although their appetite is poor, it is very important to still eat and utilizing the Meal Replacement Shakes or Snack Bars/Breakfast Bars are an excellent alternative for those that cannot eat meals. These offers a good source of easily digested protein, minerals and vitamins to help maintain body mass and energy levels during chemotherapy.

Another important supplement that patients, especially women, should initiate is Calcium Plus to help maintain and restore bone mass. In many types of cancer such as breast cancer, endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer or prostate cancer the treatment may involve significant or complete hormone

suppression which indirectly increases the loss of bone mass. In addition, there is some preliminary data that suggests that calcium supplementation may decrease the risk of boney metastasis and the associated bone pain. I recommend starting Calcium Plus two tablets three times a day throughout treatment.

During chemotherapy multiple systems in the body are directly and indirectly impacted, as you all know well, the omega3s have a huge benefit on multiple systems in the body, so it is very logical and helpful to also get OmegaPlex on board to help tolerate chemotherapy regimens better. The omega3s may help minimize nerve damage associated with many of the first line treatment chemotherapy medications. Although many foods are “fortified” with omega3s now, they often not derived from animal sources and are not absorbed as well as the DHEA/EPA in OmegaPlex. I recommend taking two OmegaPlex three times a day for cancer patients.

Finally the question often arises if increasing antioxidants will help “treat” the cancer. This is a very controversial topic in the cancer field that remains unresolved. There is data from large clinical studies that suggest “super-doses” of antioxidants in individuals with cancer or with history of cancer could increase the risk of progression of the cancer. Other studies have demonstrated potential to decrease the efficacy of the chemotherapy agents that work by creating “free radicals” that attack the cancer cells. However, since majority of this data is from lab based studies, there is some controversy if this would also happen in humans. Personally, as most pharmacists would agree, it is not worth the risk. Often chemotherapy may offer opportunity to cure or at least extend overall survival for many cancers. Until there is conclusive data that there is no drug interaction with the chemotherapy, I recommend not exceeding the daily recommend doses of any of the antioxidants. In other words I would recommend just taking a good multi-vitamin like CorePlex.

Although I do not recommend the cancer patient start on antioxidants to boost their immunity, I do think the family and close friends should all be taking ImmunoBoost to help reduce risk of getting infections exposed to the cancer patient. Since one of the primary components of ImmunoBoost is vitamin C, which is an antioxidant, it would not be good idea for cancer patient during chemotherapy treatment. Once all chemotherapy treatment has been completed and patients are in remission they begin the recovery phase. Immunoguard can help with the recover to help re-build a strong immunity. V-16 is another good product to help during the recovery phase to help rebuild immunity after completing all chemotherapy.

During chemotherapy as well as radiation used to treat cancer, the gastrointestinal (GI) tract takes a hard hit as well with symptoms of either constipation or diarrhea or both! In the recovery phase, Probiotic Restore can help re-institute balance and regulate bowel function. After receiving multiple cycles of chemotherapy, often patients complain of “chemo brain” or the inability to focus. Using SPARK can be beneficial to help regain mental focus as well as energy during recovery phase too. IntellQ can also help maintain mental focus and acuity.

Cancer is a very scary diagnosis and bad news but there are a few good things about cancer diagnosis. Hopefully it will inspire the entire family and friends to all think about what they can do get “healthier” and reduce the risk of developing cancer. We will be discussing cancer prevention more in my next blog!