

Nutritional Care for Patients with Neuroendocrine Tumors

Introduction

Neuroendocrine tumor patients can have many struggles in regard to achieving adequate nutrition and avoiding complications such as involuntary weight loss during the course of the disease. This information will help identify potential problems, their causes, and development of a plan with your medical team for ways to overcome these problems to achieve a good quality of life. The following steps will help address your nutrition needs during treatment.

Step One: Identify your medical team and your support group. Each patient should be aware of the medical members who can help answer questions and provide support for problems with regard to one's nutritional status. This is best achieved with a team approach. Here in our Neuroendocrine Clinic, the team is vital to your care. It is lead by your physician(s), with strong support from your nurses and a registered dietitian/ nutritionist who specializes in care of cancer patients.

When you visit the office, you will help the team evaluate your nutritional status by providing input to achieve adequate nutrition. This will include a nutritional screening questionnaire to be reviewed by the Dietitian. This will help identify possible problems placing you at risk for malnutrition and decreased quality of life. Depending on the level of nutritional care needed, you will be provided with information for achieving adequate nutrition. The treatment of nutritional problems will be addressed by your physician and may require medications or adjustments to present medication regimens. It may also include a visit with the Registered Dietitian which will work with you to develop personalized goals and meal planning.

Step Two: Identifying home support team. This team will include people in your life that can help with the daily routine needed to achieve adequate nutrition. For some, this will be a small group of members such as family and friends that help with the purchasing and preparation of foods. For others, it may involve members who help provide specialized products such as, medical nutritional products, necessary to achieve adequate nutrition. Information regarding patient's nutritional plan should be shared with this support team so they can adequately help. Please provide the meal plan with your support team so they can better assist in providing the appropriate foods and fluids, preparation, and timeliness of meals.

Step three: Identifying problems that will affect nutritional status:

Weight - It is important to know present weight and weight changes over time. Your weight will be followed at each visit and should be followed at home. If this is our first visit please provide weight changes you have experienced in time increments such as 1 month, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year etc. Involuntary or unplanned weight loss is a concern even if you are over weight.

Height - This will be obtained at the time of your visit. Heights do change over a lifetime and shoe heel and sole levels can affect the result.

Bowel habits - Although the subject of bowel habits is not always comfortable to discuss, it is important to address in the achievement of setting nutritional goals. Please address the questions or concerns of bowel habits very seriously. Problems such as constipation, diarrhea, and pain with bowel movements can create many problems with one's nutritional status, as well as, affect one's quality of life.

Dietary intake - Keeping and recording one's dietary intake can be time consuming and troublesome but is the most vital tool to your team for identifying causes and solutions for nutritional problems. Tools can be provided to help with collection of this information. The most important thing is to collect food and fluid type, preparation, time and symptoms, as well as, bowel habits and times to achieve calorie and protein consumed, problems with absorption and fluid needs to develop a nutritional care plan.

Nutritional Plan - If a patient is identified as not having any nutritional problems at the time of visit, it is recommended they follow the USDA Food Pyramid, Mediterranean diet or an approved health intake of foods and fluids. Resources for information for these diets or healthy eating habits can be found through links on the Nutrition page of this website.