



# Kingston Haematology Patient Support Group

**Newsletter no. 5**

**21 August 2020**

## **Welcome**

A warm welcome to our latest member of the Support Group, Keith. I hope we can meet up soon, Keith.

## **Nutrition**

I thought we could focus on nutrition in this newsletter. Eating a healthy diet is so important for all of us. And one of life's pleasures, though sometimes challenging when in treatment.

## **Sources**

I have researched this article using publications by Myeloma UK and Macmillans. I have also spoken to the Macmillan's dietitian at Kingston. I am sure you all already know the basics but it is worth re-iterating. Myeloma UK has this to say:

Myeloma patients should follow the same basic principles of healthy eating that apply to us all. Eating a healthy and balanced diet will help maintain your muscle tone and strength, increase your energy levels and may aid recovery after treatment.

A balanced diet is also rich in essential vitamins and minerals which helps the immune system to function more effectively. The same principles apply to all the blood cancers. Some of you may be having side effects from the chemotherapy which affect your enjoyment of food. Eating little and often can help. And, if living on your own, like I do, it isn't always easy to motivate yourself to cook. But you can have a healthy and tasty diet without elaborate cooking.

One of my favourite light suppers is tinned sardines on granary toast with an avocado sliced on the side. Or poached egg on spinach with grated cheese on top, or sliced field mushrooms or tomatoes cooked with garlic and herbs from the garden.

## **Breakfast**

But let's start with breakfast. My favourite meal of the day!

I am a big fan of breakfast but I don't like to eat as soon as I get up. I rehydrate with plenty of water and decaf tea, then eat about 9.30am. I find that an oat-based muesli breakfast suits me best. It really sets me up for the day. Although I like toast and marmalade as an occasional treat, it is not as sustaining.

We are told if you're going to have toast for breakfast, it should be with some form of protein, such as eggs. I like to make my own muesli rather than rely on branded cereal products, which are often high in sugar. It is easy to take some oats, moisten them with a bit of water or milk, add plain yoghurt, some soft prunes, chopped apple, walnuts and any fruit in season such as blueberries, grapes, strawberries, kiwi, pear and plums.

Some people are not keen on breakfast and may therefore rely on smoothies. However, I actually like the different textures in a muesli breakfast, which takes some time to eat and is more satisfying than a liquid meal.

My key ingredient is **Flaxseed**.



I add two dessert spoonfuls to the oats. Flaxseed (also known as linseed) is one of the world's oldest crops - in 500 BCE, Hippocrates himself used flaxseed as a remedy for intestinal discomfort. The Ancient Egyptians used flaxseed as food and medicine, one of the main traditional uses of this oily seed was to relieve constipation.

I wouldn't normally promote a particular product but I wanted to show you what the packet looks like in case you want to try it. I get it with my online Tesco delivery.

It says to keep it in the fridge after opening but I have not found that necessary, especially as we go into cooler weather. Consume within 45 days. You just use 2 dessert spoonfuls a day, which can be in cereal or porridge, in yoghurt, or smoothie etc. As well as having protein, magnesium and Omega 3, it is high in fibre. I can honestly say that I have never had constipation, even though at one time I was on a maximum dose of Co-codamol, followed by six months of chemo and now Revlimid.

**Mealtimes** I try not to eat between meals or, if I do, make it a healthy snack such as an apple. But of course I allow myself an occasional treat - coffee and cake in a nice cafe, a special dessert.

I am eating my main meal earlier these days, not later than 7pm. And sometimes I switch it to lunchtime. By evening, I am tired and often just watch television. So I don't need a large meal. But I find it helpful about 8-9pm to have a small bowl of natural yoghurt and a drizzle of Greek honey.

### **Supplements**

I have well meaning friends who are keen to tell me about the latest 'superfood' or supplement. You probably have too. I always say that I cannot have anything without consulting the nurses. And it is possible that some supplements may interfere with how the cancer treatment works and may make them less effective.

But it is also the case that the greatest benefit to our health is likely to come from eating a balanced diet that includes a wide and varied combination of foods.

**The importance of a balanced and varied diet has been emphasised by Dessie Aresti, the Macmillan dietitian. A lot of her work is around dietary misinformation.**

### **Caffeine**

Dessie says that while caffeine and caffeinated drinks act as a mild diuretic, this does not have an effect on how well hydrated a person is. There is no harm in anyone drinking teas/coffees/other caffeinated drinks in moderation, if this is what you enjoy.

I also consulted Dessie about an American website which advises Myeloma patients to avoid foods high in potassium and phosphorus because of the effect on the kidneys. This included some of my favourite foods - avocado, spinach, oats, nuts and seeds etc. Dessie is firmly of the view that no foods should be eliminated from our diet. A balanced and varied diet is the way to go. I shall continue eating these foods in moderation.

### **Organic?**

So far, there is no research done to show whether an organic diet is more effective.

### **Dairy free?**

No clear link has been found between diets high in dairy products and cancer. Because of this cancer experts do **not** recommend a dairy-free diet.

### **Sugar?**

Best to limit sugar in your diet. Cut down on biscuits, chocolate, sweets, syrups, cake, fruit juice and fizzy drinks.

### **What foods should I avoid when I have low immunity?**

If you are having intensive chemotherapy, the nurses will tell you if you have to be careful about certain foods.

Macmillan have some general tips.

1. Avoid \* products containing raw egg, such as homemade mayonnaise, pate, raw seafood, cheeses made from unpasteurised milk, such as parmesan.
2. Ensure your hands are clean while cooking and before eating
3. Make sure food is well-cooked, especially meat and fish
4. Make sure salads and fruit are washed thoroughly
5. Store food according to instructions on the packaging and check the best before and use-by dates

6. Be careful when eating out. Avoid buying food from salad bars, buffets and street vendors. Also avoid having ice cream from an ice cream van.

7. Replace dishcloths and tea towels regularly. Do not use a washing up bowl - it can harbour bacteria.

### Leftovers

Let cooked food cool down completely before storing in the fridge or freezer. Defrost fully before re-heating. Only reheat **once**. (And I never reheat **rice** at all). Make sure it is piping hot right through.

### Tanja's tips

"I like your idea about focusing on nutrition in the next newsletter. I've been thinking about that a lot too. My neutrofil (white blood cells that fight infections) count has been low (side effect of the chemo) and I've been given injections to do myself at home to boost the production of white blood cells in the spine.

"Luckily this has worked and at the last blood test my count has improved. But I've also been trying to eat foods such as Chillies, Garlic, Ginger, and Pumpkin seeds for their nutritional value.



"I find ginger and lemon tea is good especially after chemo to ease the metallic taste in the mouth.

"I have chillies, garlic and ginger lots in stir fries and with tomato sauce (pasta).

"I also love Ginger cake, although not such much on the healthy side, but still yummy. 😊 "

I agree with you, Tanja, about ginger cake. One of my favourites!

*Dorothy*



**07961 273528**



**[dorothygons@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dorothygons@yahoo.co.uk)**