

# CANCERFOCUS



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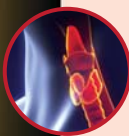

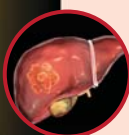
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# ALCOHOL AND CANCERS

**Dr Kan Yuk Man**  
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The Surgical Practice at Farrer Park  
Article supported by DoctorxDentist*

An increased intake in alcohol over time raises the risk of some cancers.

Moderate to heavy alcohol consumption increases your risk of some types of cancers, such as:

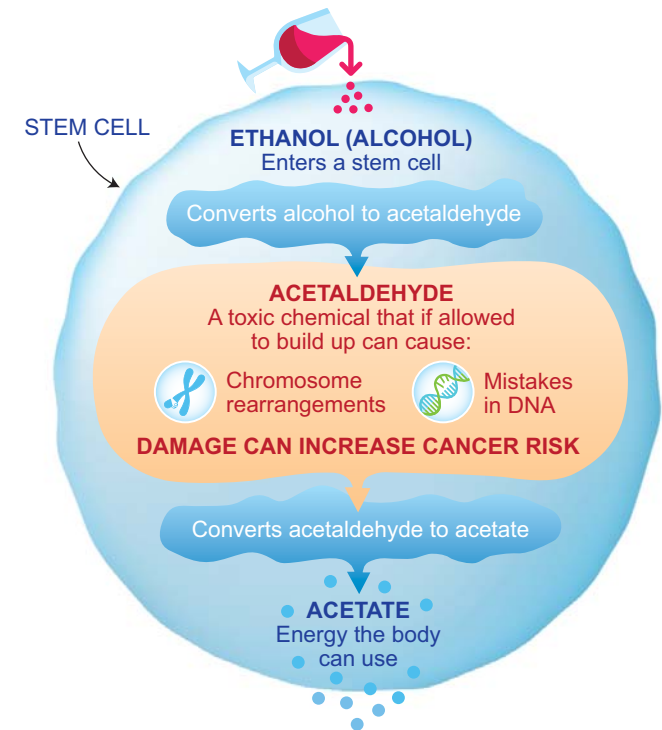
-  Mouth cancer
-  Stomach cancer
-  Throat (Esophageal) cancer
-  Breast cancer
-  Voice box (Larynx) cancer
-  Colon cancer
-  Liver (Hepatocellular) cancer

**ALL TYPES OF ALCOHOLIC DRINKS ARE LINKED WITH CANCER**

Different cancers are affected by varying amounts of alcohol consumption. For example, one is more likely to get esophageal cancer than breast cancer.

The body breaks the consumed alcohol down into a chemical called acetaldehyde. Acetaldehyde damages the DNA and prevents the body from repairing the damage.

Your body tries to repair these damaged cells, but with each attempt, there is a risk of undesirable DNA mutations that can lead to cancer.



## Does the Type of Alcohol Matter?

All types of alcoholic drinks, including red and white wine, beer, cocktails, and liquor, are linked with cancer.

All alcoholic drinks contain ethanol, which acts as an irritant for your body, damaging mouth and throat cells.

You might wonder about light alcohol drinking and whether it is beneficial for your health. If you are healthy and drink one serving of alcohol every day, which is defined as one drink for women and two for men, you will still have a mildly increased risk of breast cancer.

If you're going through chemotherapy, you should not drink alcohol. The liver breaks down the drugs used in chemotherapy. The liver also breaks down alcohol. Drinking alcohol stresses the liver further, which means that the chemotherapy drugs can't be broken down efficiently.

That is why doctors like myself recommend avoiding alcohol altogether.

Now that you understand the association between alcohol and cancer, why not skip that can of beer or glass of wine and drink a bottle of water instead?

**References:** 1. LoConte NK, Brewster AM, Kaur JS, Merrill JK, Alberg AJ. Alcohol and Cancer: A Statement of the American Society of Clinical Oncology. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. 2018;36(1):83-93. doi:10.1200/jco.2017.76.1155. 2. Choi Y-J, Myung S-K, Lee J-H. Light Alcohol Drinking and Risk of Cancer: A Meta-Analysis of Cohort Studies. *Cancer Research and Treatment*. 2018;50(2):474-487. doi:10.4143/crt.2017.094. 3. Cao Y, Giovannucci EL. Alcohol as a Risk Factor for Cancer. *Seminars in Oncology Nursing*. 2016;32(3):325-331. doi:10.1016/j.soncn.2016.05.012. 4. American Cancer Society. *Cancer.org*. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/diet-physical-activity/alcohol-use-and-cancer.html>. Published 2020. Accessed June 29, 2020.



For each of these cancers, the more alcohol you drink, the higher your cancer risk. But for some types of cancer, most notably breast cancer, consuming even small amounts of alcohol can increase risk.

# HOME EXERCISES DURING AND POST CANCER TREATMENT

**Aw Hui Zhen**  
Physiotherapist  
Singapore Cancer Society

Traditionally, cancer survivors receiving active treatments were often advised by their doctor to rest and reduce their physical activity which causes pain, rapid heart rate or shortness of breath. Newer research has shown that appropriate amount of exercise is not only safe and feasible during cancer treatment but can also preserve some functional outcomes (how well and safe you can use your body to perform tasks) and quality of life.

Physical exercise has shown potential to:



Increase muscle mass and strength



Maintain or improve physical abilities



Improve balance



Reduce risk of falls



Reduce symptoms such as cancer related fatigue



Improve self-esteem



Help to control weight



Increase joints flexibility

Prior to commencement of physical exercise, always talk to your doctor for special precautions and recommendation if you have:

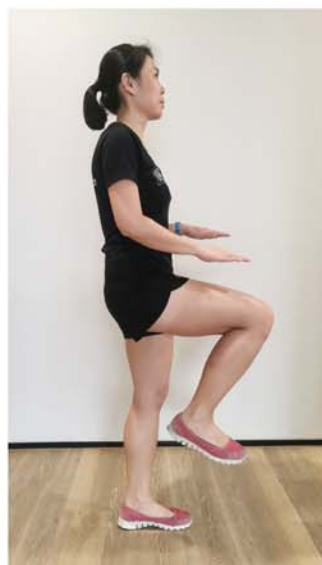
- Low red and white blood cell counts
- Unrelieved pain, nausea, vomiting or any other symptoms that prevent you to engage in safe exercises
- Cancerous cells affecting long bones
- Numbness in your feet or problems with balance
- Taking blood thinner
- Uncontrolled blood pressure

## How to Add Physical Activity to Your Daily Routine?

- Keep exercise easy and fun!
- Always start with short warm up exercises for about 5 minutes. Examples such as marching, arm circles, leg swings. Remember to breathe normally while doing the warm up exercises.
- Exercise within your own level of comfort effort. Do not push beyond your limits and listen to your body and rest when you need to. It is recommended to keep your RPE between 11-13 on a 20 point scale.

RATING OF PERCEIVED EXERTION (RPE)							
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
VERY, VERY LIGHT			VERY LIGHT		FAIRLY LIGHT		SOMEWHAT HARD





Stationary high knees



Squat overhead raise using water bottle



Wall push-up



- Use a variety of exercises

**1 Aerobic training:** Begin with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as laundry, cooking or mopping of floor. Gradually increase the level of difficulty based on your RPE to tasks such as climbing stairs, stationary high knees or butt kicks or squat jumps for 10-15 minutes. On days where you may not have enough energy to do 30 minutes of exercises within one session, you can perform 10 minutes of exercises three times a day; 3 times per week.

**2 Resistance training:** For a start, complete 5 to 10 sit-to-stands from a chair several times per day. Progress to standing exercises such as lunges, squat overhead raise using water bottle or wall push-ups. Perform 2 sets of 8-12 repetitions for each task.

- End the exercise session with stretching and relaxing techniques. Basic yoga pose such as child pose, reclining butterfly pose or corpse pose allows you to slowly relax every part of your body by concentrating on deep breathing and exhalation. You will gradually feel yourself getting 'lighter'.

Sticking to a regular exercise schedule isn't easy especially on your treatments days. You may need to reduce the intensity and length of exercise session on certain days and gradually increase workout at a slower rate after completion of treatments. The ultimate goal is to stay as active as possible while maintaining a happy and positive mindset.

Should you need more individualised exercise prescription, do visit our specialists at the Singapore Cancer Society Rehabilitation Centre.

Some useful online resources on exercises:

- <https://www.acsm.org/blog-detail/acsm-certified-blog/2019/11/25/acsm-guidelines-exercise-cancer-download>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UCkKDIXYk4&t=22s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYHbyqxjRTU>
- <https://circle.myactivesg.com/fitness>

## JOIN A CANCER REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

The first of its kind in Singapore, the SCS Cancer Rehabilitation Centre provides integrated care to address the needs of cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers.

This community-based rehabilitation centre largely serves non-acute cases before, during, or after their cancer treatment. Our rehabilitation team works with patients and caregivers to determine rehabilitation goals and craft personalised programmes.

For more information call 1800-727-3333 or email [rehab@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:rehab@singaporecancersociety.org.sg)

# COOKING NUTRITIONAL FOOD AT HOME

Dr Kan Yuk Man

General Surgeon  
The Surgical Practice at Farrer Park  
Article supported by DoctorxDentist

If you have cancer, you probably have a weaker immune system because of treatment. Treatments like:

- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy
- Medications taken

All of these kill healthy cells in your body. Even after treatment, the body will need time to recover, so you need to take extra care with food consumption.

With side effects kicking in post treatment, eating enough food to get the nutrients and calories needed may become a challenge when you are being treated for cancer.

You might need to change your diet to help build up your strength and withstand the effects of cancer and its treatment.

Many factors, like the type of cancer, the part of the body affected, the type and length of the treatment, and the dose of the treatment, affect the side effects and how bad they will be. Eating problems are unique to one form of treatment while others are common to more than one.

Some typical eating problems include:

- Appetite loss
- Changes in sense of taste or smell
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Sore mouth/throat
- Bloating
- Weight loss

Food safety in Singapore is very tight and well regulated, but this does not mean your food is entirely free from bacteria. Certain bacteria that your body might have been able to fight off in the past may cause severe illness as you undergo cancer treatment.

**References:** Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Food Safety for People with Cancer. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/food/people-risk-foodborne-illness/food-safety-people-cancer>. Published 2020. Accessed July 7, 2020.



Wash your hands and surfaces regularly



Prevent cross-contamination



Cook food to safe temperatures



Refrigerate food when you're done eating

The above are 4 simple steps you can take to prepare food safely.

You can also avoid certain foods, such as:

- Partially cooked seafood like shrimps or crabs
- Unwashed fruits and vegetables
- Raw or undercooked meat
- Raw or undercooked eggs

If you are eating leftovers, be sure to reheat your food to ensure its safety.

## How can an accredited dietitian at SCS Cancer Rehabilitation Centre help you?

- With your eating challenges (e.g. nausea, bland taste, bloatedness and constipation)
- Determine your nutritional goal and identify the problem areas, including mind sabotage
- Work with you using realistic and reliable solutions, including changing of mindset
- Answer your questions and clear confusing advice you have been receiving
- Provide follow-up assessment and review your progress, if required

For more information call 1800-727-3333 or email [elaine\\_loh@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:elaine_loh@singaporecancersociety.org.sg)



# DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT HOSPICE CARE

Dr Teoh Ren Shang

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Singapore Cancer Society

## MYTH 1

**Hospice care only involves medical care at the end of life**

Hospice care is about providing holistic health care, covering a variety of areas such as physical, psychological, social/financial, and spiritual/existential. Ideally, we are involved early in the course of the illness, so we can get to understand our clients' needs early and prepare plans in advance.

## MYTH 2

**Doctors and nurses are the only healthcare professionals providing hospice care**

Hospice care is multi-disciplinary in nature, involving a variety of healthcare professionals to provide holistic care across a variety of domains. To give a few examples, it could involve Social Workers in the psychological and social aspects, Therapists in rehabilitation, and Pastoral Care in the spiritual/existential area. SCS Hospice Care services has a team of doctors, nurses, social workers, and therapists from the SCS Cancer Rehabilitation Centre, to provide comprehensive holistic hospice care to our clients.

## MYTH 3

**Hospice care is only provided in inpatient hospices where residents stay in until they pass away**

There are a variety of settings in which hospice care is provided. Yes, there are inpatient hospices which is a residential facility where on-site medical and nursing care are provided round the clock. There are also Hospital Palliative units that aim to provide hospice-oriented advice and management within the hospitals. There are also home hospice services, such as the one provided by SCS, where hospice care is provided through visits to our clients' homes, and we facilitate care at home until our patient passes away if that is their wish.

## MYTH 4

**Terminally ill patients in their last weeks of life can only be adequately cared for in a care facility, such as an inpatient hospice or acute hospital**

With proper symptom management (e.g. control of pain and breathlessness), caregiver education and support, proper equipment (e.g. hospital bed, oxygen concentrators), many terminally ill patients have achieved their wish to pass away peacefully in their own homes. Home hospice services exist to fulfill this need. SCS Hospice Care services has helped many terminally ill cancer patients to pass away in their own homes. However, if care at home in the last weeks of life is just not possible, SCS Hospice Care service can facilitate transfers to an appropriate care facility if needed.

## MYTH 5

**Hospice care only involves the terminally ill, often forgetting the needs of caregivers**

That is absolutely not true! In hospice care, we recognise that our terminally ill patients and their caregivers are an inseparable package. We need caregivers to be sufficiently competent, skilled, and supported, in order to provide the best possible for their loved one. We are constantly looking out for caregivers, identifying any possible gaps to be plugged, by providing caregiver training, financial assistance, emotional support, and any other possible help. Without able and supported caregivers, it would be impossible to fulfill our patients' wish to pass away in their own homes.

## SINGAPORE CANCER SOCIETY (SCS)

**HOSPICE CARE**, the first hospice home care service in Singapore, was established in 1987. Since then, the team has provided home hospice care to support the needs of the Singapore community. SCS Hospice Care, as the team is now known, is one of the founding members of the Singapore Hospice Council. Since its formation, our hospice care services have been increasing in both capacity and capability to better cope with growing needs. In the advanced stages of cancer, patients may choose to receive care and support in their homes to maximise their quality of life for as long as possible. Many patients prefer to spend their final days with their loved ones in the comfort of their own homes. The SCS Hospice Care team applies a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure that both patients' and their family members' needs are appropriately assessed and addressed.

For more information:  
Email [hospice@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:hospice@singaporecancersociety.org.sg) or  
call 1800 727 3333.



Established in 1964, Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), a voluntary welfare organisation has positively impacted the lives of those affected by cancer.

It actively promotes cancer awareness in the community and offers cancer screening services [Mammogram, Pap test, Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)], welfare assistance, community based cancer rehabilitation, cancer support group activities and hospice care to support cancer patients and families.

## OUR VISION

To be Singapore's leading charity in the fight for a cancer-free community.

## OUR MISSION

To Minimise Cancer and Maximise Lives through effective programmes.

## OUR PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

### 1. Financial Assistance

- Cancer Treatment Fund (Cancer treatment subsidies for cancer patients)
- Cancer Care Fund
- Welfare Aid for needy cancer patients

### 2. Free Cancer Screening

- Pap test and HPV test (For Cervical cancer)
- Health Education: Breast Self-Examination
- Mammogram screening (For Breast cancer; CHAS Card Holders)
- Faecal Immunochemical Test [FIT] (For Colorectal cancer)

### 3. Public Education

- Cancer awareness campaigns
- Cancer-related talks and forums
- Cancer information (via website & telephone service)

### 4. Cancer Support

- Cancer support groups and activities
- Psycho-social services

### 5. Cancer Rehabilitation

- Integrated, person-centred holistic approach with aim to return to normalcy

### 6. Hospice Care Services

- Medical and psycho-social care for terminally ill cancer patients

### 7. Cancer Research

- Cancer research grants and awards

### 8. Volunteers Programme

- Volunteering opportunities to suit people with different interests and skills

## CONTACT US

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# HAVING A FULL CONTINUUM OF CARE



Sam Ho was referred to the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) by a Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurse (PCSN).

He was in a state of shock when he received his diagnosis result. He said, *"Being told that your biopsy results show that you have cancer is one of the worst news one can receive. I had to do more tests and scans to find out the stage of the cancer. I had to make quick decisions. It was so stressful going through all this 2 years back."*

After his diagnosis, Sam realised how little he knew about cancer. A PCSN shared with him about SCS and the SCS Prostate Cancer Specialist Nursing Programme.

SCS collaborates with local hospitals to establish the SCS Prostate Cancer Specialist Nursing Programme to enhance support and care for patients throughout their cancer journey. The programme is to ensure that prostate cancer patients in health-care settings are provided with appropriate resources to ensure timely delivery of care, enhance the delivery of optimum care, and address their psychological needs through community outreach to improve their quality of life.

The SCS PCSN also refers prostate cancer patients for immersion into SCS' programmes and services, providing a holistic support and care.

Sam said, *"The nurse gave useful information on what to expect pre, during and post-surgery. She taught me how to do the Kegler exercises and provided her mobile number to me to contact/text her as and when needed. She visited to check on me in the ward after surgery. She also conducted a pre and post-surgery survey on my overall well-being. She introduced me to the SCS Walnut Warriors Support Group."* Sam also added, *"This initiative supports newly diagnosed prostate cancer patients with adequate information. This has helped me cope with minor issues that may have previously led to unnecessary clinic or emergency department visits. This has given much hope and peace to all patients in their time of need."*

The SCS Prostate Cancer Survivorship Programme is a collaborative programme with a network of hospitals (SGH, NUH, TTSH and CGH) to provide seamless support and transition between healthcare and the community. This programme integrates the Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurse Programme, Psychosocial Support, Financial Assistance, Exercise and/or Cancer Rehabilitation Care to support prostate cancer patients.

Information on the Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurse Programme can be checked with your Doctors from the participating hospitals.

For more information on SCS Support Groups:

Email [supportgroup@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:supportgroup@singaporecancersociety.org.sg) or call 1800-727-3333.

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Singapore Cancer Society.**

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