



# FROM TREATMENT TO TABLE

A collection of recipes and  
tips for head and neck  
cancer patients

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**A special thank you to the patients and carers from around Australia who contributed recipes and shared helpful tips to make this recipe book possible.**

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Lastly we would like to acknowledge the health professionals who contributed to this project: Narelle Greenlees (Dietitian, The University Centre for Rural Health and Griffith University), Emily Francis and Katherine Garner (Dietitians, Northern NSW Cancer Institute), Allison Grady (Speech Pathologist, Northern NSW Cancer Institute) and Yonit Kittay (Community Programs Coordinator at Cancer Council Northern NSW). Each have provided us with extensive professional guidance and taught us a great deal about both nutrition in oncology and community cancer care initiatives.

## **A note to the reader**

Please consult your doctor, or other medical professionals (like dietitians or speech pathologists) about any medical concerns you may have. The recipe book is a general guide, and may not be applicable to all head and neck cancer patients. The information in this book should not be used as a substitute for personalised medical and/or dietary advice. You may wish to use the recommendations in this book, in addition to advice from medical professionals. The authors of this book and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this booklet.

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# INTRODUCTION

It is important to maintain good nutrition before, during and after cancer treatments, to maintain strength and weight and support the body's healing process. Head and neck cancer patients often experience many side effects which makes eating a challenging task. This recipe book aims to provide quick, cheap and nutritious meals as well as tips and tricks from head and neck cancer patients.

## High Protein High Energy Diet

A high protein high energy diet is often recommended during your cancer treatment and for recovery. Energy (or calories) is important to help maintain weight and protein is important for immune function and to help build, repair and maintain tissues in your body. Aim to have regular meals and snacks, eating every 2-3 hours.

### High Protein Foods

- Meat e.g. beef, lamb, pork
- Poultry e.g. chicken, duck
- Dairy e.g. milk, yoghurt, cheese
- Eggs
- Legumes e.g. baked beans
- Tofu

### High Energy Foods

- Full cream dairy products
- Desserts e.g. ice-cream, custard
- Butter, margarine, oils
- Avocado
- Nuts and seeds

### Protein

You need a total of \_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein each day.

### Energy

You need a total of \_\_\_\_\_ calories (kcal) of energy each day.



# FOOD TEXTURES

If you have swallowing difficulties your Speech Pathologist will discuss the correct diet texture and/or fluid consistency for you.

Throughout this book the texture of each recipe (excluding smoothies) will be listed on the bottom of each page and will help guide those on texture modified diets.

## SUPPLEMENTS

We recommend Nestlé's SUSTAGEN® Hospital Formula ACTIVE throughout this book because it is nutritionally complete, meaning each service includes high amounts of protein for muscle health and essential vitamins and minerals to support energy function and bone health. This is available from chemists in a range of flavours. We recommend neutral flavour for use with cooking. As an alternative we recommend Abbot's ENSURE®.

As a cost effective solution to SUSTAGEN® Hospital Formula, we simply recommend milk powder as a method to increase energy and protein content of meals and drinks (although not a nutritionally complete alternative).







# BANANA OAT SMOOTHIE

Ingredients:

- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 cup ice
- 1/4 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup vanilla yoghurt
- 1/2 cup full cream milk
- 2 tbsp peanut butter
- 1/4 cup milk powder
- 1 tbsp honey or to taste
- Cinnamon to taste

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.



Milk powder can be substituted with  
SUSTAGEN®  
Hospital Formula

Energy: 850kcal | Protein: 33g | Serves: 1



# BERRY SMOOTHIE

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup frozen mixed berries
- 1 medium frozen banana
- 1/2 tbsp chia seeds
- 3 scoops SUSTAGEN® Hospital formula
- 3/4 cup full cream milk

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.



Energy: 520kcal | Protein: 23g | Serves: 1



# MANGO SMOOTHIE

6

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup full cream milk
- 3/4 cup Greek yogurt (plain, vanilla)
- 1 frozen banana
- 3/4 cup frozen mango
- 1 tbsp unsweetened shredded coconut
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp chia seeds (optional)

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.



Add milk powder or  
SUSTAGEN®  
Hospital Formula for  
extra protein



Energy: 510kcal | Protein: 24g | Serves: 1





# COFFEE MILKSHAKE

Ingredients:

- 1/2 tbsp instant coffee
- 2 scoops vanilla ice-cream
- 1 cup full cream milk
- 3 scoops SUSTAGEN® Hospital formula or milk powder
- 1/2 tbsp honey

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

Energy: 660kcal | Protein: 27g | Serves: 1



# MAIN MEALS





# BANANA PORRIDGE

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup quick oats
- 1 cup full cream milk
- 1/2 banana, sliced
- Pinch of salt
- Cinnamon to taste
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- 1/3 cup milk powder
- Your favourite toppings. E.g. bananas, strawberries, peanut butter, Nutella (*fruit toppings can be stewed, mashed or blended as required*).



Try adding cream or condensed milk to increase the protein and energy.

1. Add oats, milk, banana slices, salt, cinnamon, vanilla essence and milk powder to a pot and stir to combine.
2. Heat over medium-high heat for 8-10 minutes or until all the liquid has been absorbed.
3. Remove oats from the heat and add your favourite toppings.

Hint: Be sure to stir the oats several times while cooking to make sure the banana slices melt into the oats.



Energy: 590kcal | Protein: 25g | Serves: 1 | Texture: Puree



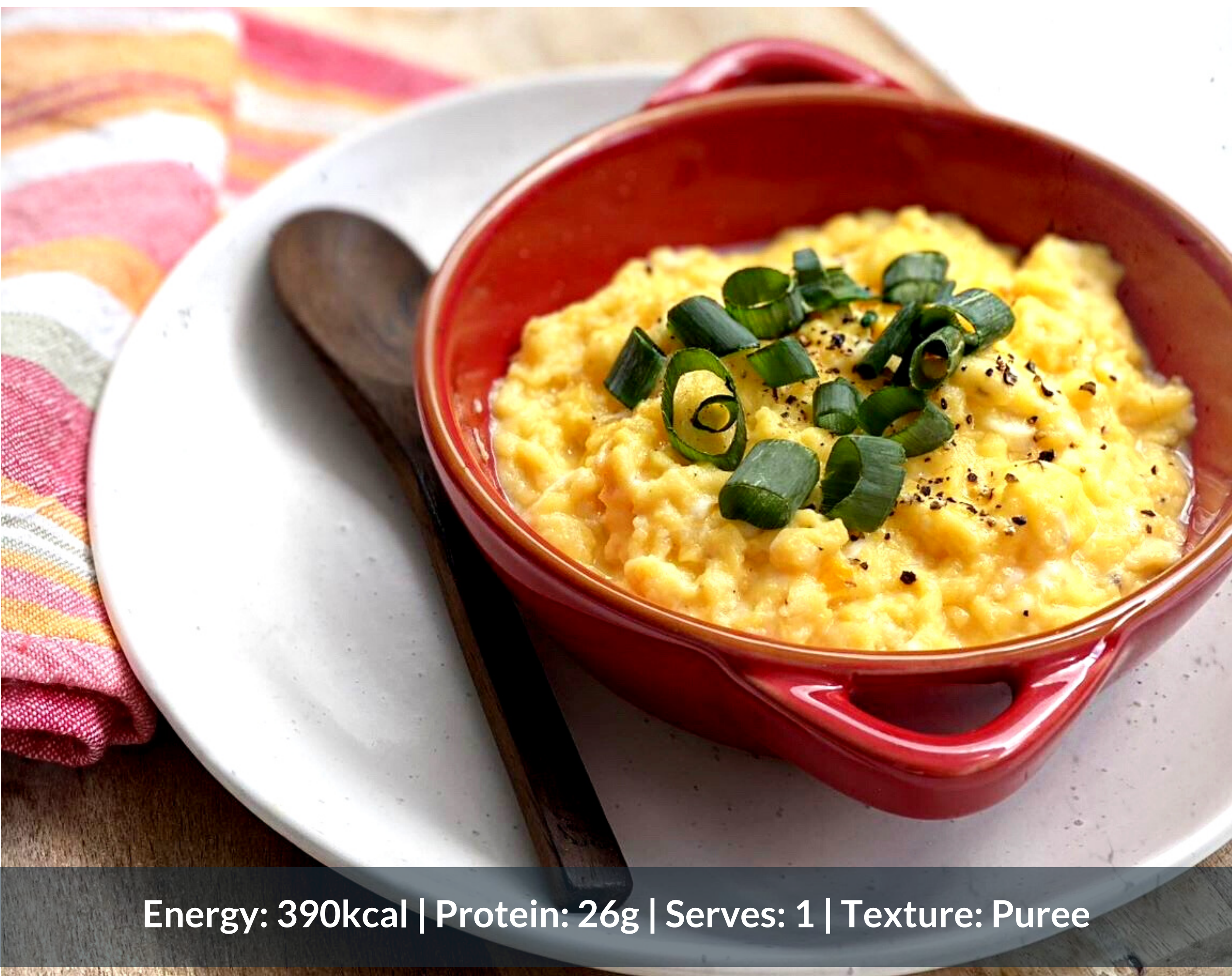
# SCRAMBLED EGGS

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup full cream milk
- 1/4 cup grated cheese
- Butter, for pan
- Salt to taste
- 1 scoop SUSTAGEN® Hospital Formula or milk powder

1. Whisk together all ingredients.
2. Butter pan until fully coated.
3. Cook mixture over medium heat until soft and fluffy.

The SUSTAGEN® Hospital Formula or milk powder adds extra protein to the meal!



Energy: 390kcal | Protein: 26g | Serves: 1 | Texture: Puree





# BAKED SPINACH, PARMESAN AND EGG WHITE SOUFFLE

Ingredients:

- 20g butter
- 2 tbsp of finely grated parmesan cheese
- 3/4 cup (60g) finely grated parmesan cheese (extra)
- 2 cups (50g) baby spinach leaves
- 6 egg whites
- 1 tsp finely chopped tarragon (optional)
- 1/2 cup (120g) fresh ricotta cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 180°C fan-forced. Brush four ramekins with butter and divide the parmesan (2 tbsp) between the ramekins and shake to cover them well.
2. Place the spinach in a bowl and cover with boiling water and drain immediately. Transfer to paper towel, dry and chop finely.
3. Place the egg whites in a large bowl and whisk until soft peaks form.
4. Add the spinach and tarragon about 40 grams of the extra parmesan, the ricotta, salt and pepper and gently fold to combine.
5. Spoon the mixture into the ramekins and place on a baking tray and bake for 12-14 minutes or until puffed and slightly golden. Top with the remaining 20g parmesan and serve immediately.

Energy: 570kcal | Protein: 23g | Serves: 4 | Texture: Soft



# CONGEE

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup sushi rice
- 2.5 L chicken stock
- Salt
- Soy sauce, spring onions, finely chopped fresh ginger and sesame oil for serving

1. Rinse and drain the rice.
2. Put the rice in a large pot with the chicken stock and bring to boil.
3. Give the rice a good stir.
4. Lower to medium heat and half-cover the pan.
5. Simmer gently for 1.5-2hrs, stirring every 15 minutes, until the grains have burst open and you have a thick congee.
6. When the stock has become integrated with the rice and is the consistency of oatmeal, season lightly with salt to taste.
7. Serve with soy sauce, spring onion and ginger or sesame oil to taste.

Tip: The congee will continue to thicken as it cools and can be thinned with additional chicken stock if desired. Add soft tofu, legumes, shredded chicken or any other extras you desire to increase protein and energy.







# CREAMY SWEET POTATO AND LENTIL SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small brown onion, diced
- 1 kg sweet potato, roughly chopped
- 2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
- 2 cans lentils, drained
- 5 cups vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups milk powder
- Fresh basil and cream for serving (optional)

Adding cream on top will help increase the calories!

1. Heat oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Cook onion, stirring for 2-3 minutes until soft.
3. Add sweet potato, carrot, stock and pepper to taste.
4. Bring saucepan to the boil, then reduce to low-medium.
5. Simmer for 20-25 minutes or until carrot is soft.
6. Stir in lentils and cook until hot.
7. Remove from heat and sit for 5 minutes.
8. Blend in batches (or use stick blender in saucepan).
9. Return to saucepan over low heat.
10. If soup is too thick, add water (or full cream milk for additional energy/protein) and keep stirring until soup is hot. Add cream on top.

**Energy: 410kcal | Protein: 17g | Serves: 6 | Texture: Puree**



# VEGETABLE QUICHE

Ingredients:

- 6 eggs
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1 cup full cream milk
- 1/2 cup natural yoghurt
- 1/3 cup self-raising flour
- 1 cup cheese
- 1 tbsp parmesan cheese
- 4 cups frozen vegetables

1. Preheat oven to 180°C fan-forced.
2. Mix eggs, oil, milk, yoghurt and cheese in a bowl.
3. Cook frozen vegetable in microwave and add to egg mixture.
4. Place mixture into a baking dish with sides at least 10 cm high.
5. Bake in oven for 30-45 minutes.



Energy: 510kcal | Protein: 27g | Serves: 4 | Texture: Soft



# SALMON WITH CREAMY DILL SAUCE

## Ingredients:

- 2 fillets of fresh or frozen salmon (without skin)
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 250g red potatoes
- 2 tbsp butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Any seasonings of your choice (fresh/dried herbs or garlic)

## For the sauce:

- 1/2 tbsp fresh dill
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp cream

1. Preheat oven to 180°C fan-forced.
2. Season salmon with salt and pepper and bake, wrapped in foil, in oven for 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, pierce holes into potatoes using a fork.
4. Coat with olive oil and any seasonings and microwave for 8 mins or until soft.
5. Add butter and mash with fork until a creamy consistency reached.
6. Remove cooked salmon from oven and set aside.
7. For the sauce, in a bowl, combine olive oil, salt, pepper, dried rosemary, garlic powder, lemon juice, cream and fresh dill.
8. Serve sauce on top of salmon with mashed potatoes.



Energy: 590kcal | Protein: 30g | Serves: 2 | Texture: Soft



# SLOW COOKED BEEF STEW

## Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 kg stew meat, cut into 3cm cubes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 500g baby red potatoes, quartered
- 4 carrots, cut into thick slices
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups beef stock
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp fennel seeds, optional
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup plain flour
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley leaves

1. Heat olive oil in a pan over medium heat and cook beef with salt and pepper until evenly browned, about 2-3 minutes.
2. Place beef, potatoes, carrots, onion and garlic into a slow cooker and stir in beef stock, tomato paste, Worcestershire, thyme, rosemary, paprika, fennel seeds and bay leaves and season with salt and pepper, to taste.
3. Cover and cook on low heat for 7-8 hours or high heat for 3-4 hours.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together flour and 1/2 cup stew broth. Stir in flour mixture into the slow cooker.
5. Cover and cook on high heat for an additional 30 minutes, or until thickened then serve.
6. Add parsley on top when served



Energy: 395kcal | Protein: 50g | Serves: 6 | Texture: Regular



# DESSERTS





# CHOCOLATE CUSTARD

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp corn flour
- 200ml water
- 400ml full cream milk
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1 tbsp vanilla essence

1. Whisk the corn flour and water together until smooth.
2. Add remaining ingredients into a medium saucepan on a low heat and whisk together to break up the egg, then add the corn flour mix.
3. Turn the stove heat just under high. You don't want it to boil.
4. Continue to whisk until custard thickens, about 5-10 mins.
5. The mixture will begin to resemble custard and will thicken more once cooled .



Energy: 255kcal | Protein: 8g | Serves: 4 | Texture: Puree



# TRIFLE

Ingredients:

- 1 large sponge cake
- 1 punnet fresh strawberries
- 300 ml thickened cream (whipped to stiff peaks)
- 1L custard
- 1 packet of jelly (prepared by packet instructions)
- 400g tinned fruit of choice (berries, peaches or apricots)
- 1/4 cup desiccated coconut
- 2 tbsp grated chocolate

Assemble the ingredients in the following order:

1. Cut sponge cake in half and place in the base of bowl.
2. Cut strawberries in half and place around edge of bowl.
3. Add half of whipped cream.
4. Add 500ml custard.
5. Add half of prepared jelly.
6. Add half of tinned fruit.
7. Add remaining half of sponge cake.
8. Add remaining half of tinned fruit.
9. Add remaining half of jelly.
10. Add 500ml of custard.
11. Add remaining half of cream.
12. Decorate with strawberries and grated chocolate.

Energy: 524kcal | Protein: 10g | Serves: 8 | Texture: Soft





# CHOCOLATE LAVA MUG CAKE

## Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- 3 tbsp full cream milk
- 1 egg
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup chocolate chips
- 1 tbsp water
- Ice-cream (optional)



Increase the protein and energy by adding 1 scoop of SUSTAGEN® Hospital Formula + 1 tbsp full cream milk (so the mixture is not too dry)

1. Whisk together the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt until well combined in mug.
2. Add in the melted butter, milk, egg and vanilla and whisk well.
3. Place the chocolate chips in the centre of the mug and drizzle water over the batter.
4. Cook in microwave for 1-2 minutes or until the cake rises to the top, the edges look set.
5. Serve with ice-cream if desired, to increase calories.

**Energy: 1020kcal | Protein: 16g | Serves: 1 | Texture: Soft**



# BREAD AND BUTTER PUDDING

Ingredients:

- 4 eggs
- 1/4 cup caster sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 cups full cream milk
- 300 ml pure cream
- 8 thick slices white bread, crusts removed
- 60 g butter, softened
- 1/2 cup sultanas (optional)
- Ice-cream (optional)

You can also replace the sultanas with chocolate chips or even try adding butter with jam to the bread slices before baking!

1. Preheat oven to 180°C/160°C fan-forced. Grease a 5cm-deep, 17cm x 28cm (base) baking dish. Whisk eggs, caster sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, milk and cream in a bowl.
2. Butter both sides of the bread and cut each slice in half diagonally.
3. Layer half of the sliced bread on the bottom of the prepared dish.
4. Sprinkle with half the sultanas.
5. Repeat with remaining bread and sultanas.
6. Pour egg mixture over bread. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until golden and set. Serve with ice-cream if desired.



Energy: 622kcal | Protein: 15g | Serves: 6 | Texture: Regular



# TIPS AND TRICKS FROM PATIENTS

Thank you to patient **John** (from Gold Coast), who has provided some handy tips and tricks for newly diagnosed patients.



John (a Dentist and cancer survivor) recommends to "try lots of different foods as possible, as you can surprisingly tolerate different things".

He mentioned how painful mouth sores from treatment can effect how much you eat especially if there is strong burning feeling that gets easily irritated by food. He shared how extreme temperatures (too hot or too cold) was at times hard to handle for him so avoiding anything with extreme temperature differences can help with any pain in the mouth area.

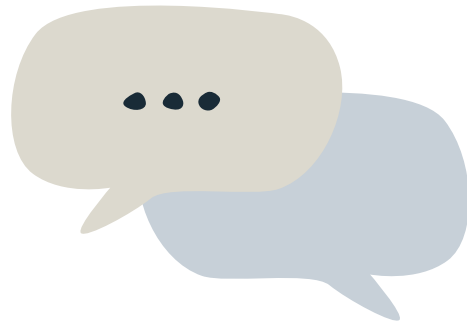
John also shared helpful suggestions for mouth care and mentioned mouth washes are a must. Gargle thoroughly straight after every meal. It is essential that the mouth is kept clean to facilitate healing. Brush teeth with the softest bristles."

John's inspiring message to others is: "treatment can be very tough but be patient and strong it will end, it's just a matter of time and you will get through it. You just need to learn by trial and error [with different foods] and find what works for you".



# TIPS AND TRICKS FROM PATIENTS

Thank you to patient **Gary** (from Woy Woy), who has provided many handy tips and tricks for newly diagnosed patients.



Gary recommends soup can help when/with swallowing foods with a dry mouth by providing lubrication in the mouth and throat.

He describes having a spoonful of soup after every bite of food. He found this helps to coat the mouth and throat, allowing foods to slide down easily. He recommends using a creamy pumpkin and sweet potato soups, as a cheap and convenient option.

When swallowing medications, Gary recommends using pre-packaged cream caramel or yoghurts to help tablets pass down the throat.



# TIPS AND TRICKS FROM PATIENTS

Thank you to patient **Andy** (from Melbourne), who told us about the foods that helped him through his journey and the foods that he has avoided.



Andy says that all cancer patients are different, and it can take a while to figure out what works best for you. Therefore, it is important that you stay positive through your journey and be prepared for a process of trial and error before you find the foods that work best for you.

Andy's number 1 tip is to "add cream to everything". Cream has been a good lubricant to help swallow foods after his radiotherapy treatment. He found it best to choose fish over chicken, as chicken can become too dry, making it hard to swallow.

Andy recommends to cook foods longer than you think is necessary. You have to rethink the way you cook. This will help ensure foods are soft in texture. But, don't cook them too long, as they can become dry. It's all about finding the happy medium.

Andy's favourite foods after his treatment were soups, anything with eggs, tiramisu, chunky pasta with lots of cream, stews with slow cooked meats and fresh veg, fish cooked in the oven with milk and cream.



# SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Patients shared their journey and discussed tried and tested methods for management for common symptoms experienced during treatment including:



## **Dry mouth:**

- Mouth cares (i.e. sodium bicarb mouthwashes and dry mouth gels and sprays)
- Choose moist foods and add extra sauces and gravies
- Sip fluids with meals

## **Mouth ulcers:**

- Having soup with solid foods to help lubricate throat for ease of swallowing
- Avoid tough, hard or spicy foods which may irritate ulcers and be hard to swallow
- Avoiding extreme temperatures i.e. too hot or too cold food

## **Difficulty/pain swallowing:**

- Discuss with your speech pathologist what the appropriate diet texture is for you
- Talk to your treating team about pain relief medication

## **Low appetite, feeling fuller than usual:**

- Choosing nourishing drinks for quick nutrition when not feeling hungry
- Prioritising protein foods first in meals to ensure adequate nutrition even if the meal is not fully finished
- Having regular meals to stimulate appetite

## **Fatigue:**

- Opting for quick and easy meals such as yoghurt tubs, protein drinks/supplements, frozen meals, baked beans



# THE AUTHORS



From left to right: Blake Palmer, Natalie Geale and Vrinda Ahlavadi

We are Griffith University Nutrition and Dietetics students from the Gold Coast. We developed this recipe book as a part of our placement project and have tried and tested each of the recipes included in this recipe book. We interviewed many past head and neck patients who contributed helpful tips and shared recipes they reached for the most during their journey. We hope this book helps those with head and neck cancer to find some tasty recipes and tips and tricks for their symptom management.

A special mention to Yvonne McClaren, a past patient, for providing the Baked Spinach, Parmesan and Egg White Souffle recipe. Yvonne has recently created a recipe book for head and neck cancer patients called *Easy Follow Easy Swallow*. She is currently designing an online workshop for patients with dysphagia who are transitioning from tube feeds to full oral diets. Further details for her cookbook and workshop can be seen on her website [www.yvonnemcclaren.com](http://www.yvonnemcclaren.com)



# FROM TREATMENT TO TABLE

'From Treatment to Table' is a recipe book written for those with head and neck cancer. These cancers can be life changing. Changes to the foods you eat and the way you eat these foods are among the biggest changes experienced by newly diagnosed patients. The recipes in this book will hopefully inspire you to experiment with new foods and find new tastes that you love.

The recipes in this book have been recommended by past and current head and neck cancer patients from around Australia. All recipes have been tried and tested by Nutrition and Dietetics students from Griffith University in collaboration with dietitians and speech pathologists from the Northern NSW Cancer Institute.