



Diane Z. Quale:

Welcome to Conversations About Bladder Cancer. I'm Diane Zipursky Quale, the co-founder of BCAN. And I'm here today at Lynne Peterson Holmes Teaching Kitchen, at the Smith Center for Healing and the Arts in Washington D.C. Radical cystectomy, the removal of your bladder is a big, life altering surgery, which also is the standard of care for muscle invasive bladder cancer. For many patients, the first phase in this treatment is to undergo systemic chemotherapy. So today we want to talk about the steps that patients can take with their diet to make sure they are as healthy and strong as possible before surgery and following this surgery. Joining me here today is Dr. Jill Hamilton-Reeves. She's a specialist in translational and clinical nutrition science focusing on nutrition and cancer prevention and management with an emphasis on bladder cancer. Jill joins us from the University of Kansas Medical Center. And we also have Laura Pole, who's an oncology clinical nurse specialist, a health supportive chef and the director of nourishment programs here at the Smith Center for Healing and the Arts. Thank you both so much for joining me. So, having your bladder removed is a big deal. It is a huge surgery. So we really want to focus on that today, on what advice we can provide patients and their caregivers to help them on this major journey. And we know that for many patients, the standard of care often is to first undergo systemic chemotherapy before surgery. Chemotherapy can be very effective, but it doesn't come without its own cost. So Jill, can you tell us some of the impact that chemotherapy has on the body and some of the things that patients need to be aware of?

Jill Hamilton-R:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think setting expectations is really helpful for preparing and also recovering from cancer treatments. One of the issues is that a lot of times magnesium goes down when taking a platinum based therapy like most bladder cancer patients would be taking.

Diane Z. Quale:

And a platinum based therapy, specifically Cisplatin or Carboplatin.

Jill Hamilton-R: Right, right. So keeping an eye on that magnesium and thinking about eating magnesium rich foods. Other issues are taste changes. And so a lot of times our patients will complain of a metallic taste or just things tasting funny and there are a lot of great tricks to help deal with that. Like consuming tart tasting foods or using wooden utensils instead of metal utensils, because there's sort of a metallic taste that oftentimes is associated with that. And then sometimes people just aren't hungry. And so thinking about ways to making food appetizing and easy, especially if they're feeling tired.

Diane Z. Quale: So Laura, do you have some specific suggestions for us on what patients can use to help deal, perhaps, with that horrible metallic taste that they might be getting in their mouth?

Laura Pole: Yeah, well one thing Jill mentioned was citrus tart taste. So I've made, actually, a little lemonade and it's also a way to get in your greens.

Diane Z. Quale: Ah, the ever important greens!

Laura Pole: Yeah, the ever important greens. So, it has some kale in it, it has lemons, it has oranges, apples, so you're getting lots of fiber and lots of good, what we call phytonutrients, all those good things in those fruits and vegetables. And we sweeten it with dates, which has fiber. And so does everything in there. And so it's kind of a high fiber, delicious, refreshing drink and it also has magnesium in it. So it's a much tastier way to get hydrated than to drink Pedialyte or Gatorade or go get an IV.

Jill Hamilton-R: And sometimes patients are taking anti nauseating medicines that are constipating. And so this is also a great idea to stay hydrated and get your fiber.

Diane Z. Quale: That tastes really good! It truly tastes like lemonade.

Laura Pole: And by the way, we were talking about a little bit of the things you can do to make this a little easier, so I took frozen kale, which is already cut up, already blanched a little bit, and we know that vegetables like kale, or cruciferous vegetables, some of the nutrients come when you've cooked it a little bit. So everybody's throwing raw kale in their smoothies but this is blanched a little bit, cooked a little bit and put in here so it's done some of the work for you in digestion.

Diane Z. Quale: Well it's wonderful. I know that chemotherapy can suppress your appetite so finding things that are tasty and good, Laura, can you tell us about maybe other recipes for smoothies or things that will at least help me get my vitamins while I don't have an appetite?

Laura Pole: Yes. Well I kind of hear about your love for healthy sweets and treats. And there's a great recipe for a chocolate banana smoothie.

Diane Z. Quale: That sounds great!

Laura Pole: Chocolate's high in magnesium. Banana's high in potassium. And it doesn't have refined sugar in it so it's using the banana for the sweetness in it, and really delicious. And it's got almond butter in it so it's got protein. It's got fat, so it'll have some calories, especially when people are a little bit challenged in getting enough calories in.

Diane Z. Quale: Yes. So that sounds really tasty!

Laura Pole: And they have a recipe for that.

Diane Z. Quale: Wonderful. Wonderful. So why is magnesium so important?

Jill Hamilton-R: Well magnesium is really helpful for bone health. It's also known to be relaxing and help calm people. So sometimes people take magnesium to help as a sleep aid. And magnesium also helps with gut function. So regular function of the gut. Either swinging diarrhea to constipation, magnesium helps keep people regular.

Diane Z. Quale: So after chemotherapy there'll be a period of time for patients to recover. And then in the time before surgery, and even for those patients who might not undergo chemotherapy before surgery, is there something that patients can be doing to help prepare for the surgery so that they're in the best possible place prior to undergoing surgery?

Jill Hamilton-R: Yeah, absolutely. So one of the key things is to just really get your strength back up. So that would involve moving around quite a bit, as much as possible, and eating protein. So getting some protein into the body to build up your muscle reserves and be ready to undergo that surgery. A few days leading up to surgery, getting enough carbohydrates is important. I know sometimes the popular media makes us think that we need to avoid carbs, but right before surgery it's great to get your blood sugar nice and stable and get enough carbs to prepare for that stress response of being cut open. And then the last thing is that there's really strong data suggesting that you need to have really good iron stores before undergoing major surgery. So low iron levels in the blood are predictive of complications and problems. So making sure that you're eating foods that are great sources of iron to build up those stores before the surgery will be very important.

Diane Z. Quale: So Laura, I assume that in terms of carb loading before surgery, just doing a bowl of pasta, I can probably do something better than just a plain bowl of pasta. Do you have some suggestions for us?

Laura Pole: Well I do. We made this cheesy, uncheesy casserole and so for those folks who aren't having any dairy, we've created a sense of dairy in this dish. So it's got a whole grain pasta. We use whole grain rice pasta because whole wheat pasta, the flavor kind of overpowers everything with it. And made a sauce with cashews, nutritional yeast, turmeric, carrots, squash and eggs. And blended it all together so it looks like melted Velveeta cheese.

Jill Hamilton-R: To get that funny yellow color, right? The turmeric.

Laura Pole: Yeah, that funny yellow color. And you mix it with the pasta and we have some onions in there as well. And we put it in the oven, bake it until it's nice and bubbly and here we have our cheesy, uncheesy casserole. Oh and the other thing that's in it are white beans, cannelloni beans.

Diane Z. Quale: Gives me my protein?

Laura Pole: It gives you your protein, and you also get some protein from the cashews and the eggs. So there are cashews in the sauce. So you've got good, healthy fats, you've got protein, and you've got your whole grain carbohydrates in here.

Diane Z. Quale: This is really delicious.

Jill Hamilton-R: Yeah, this is one I haven't tried yet. It's so, so good. And look, it's so yellow.

Laura Pole: Yeah, I know.

Jill Hamilton-R: That's the thing, you know you can't replicate normally with other mac and cheese recipes.

Laura Pole: Yeah. And the nutritional yeast, which is high in B vitamins, it also tastes a little bit like cheese if you mix it with something.

Diane Z. Quale: Now you had mentioned the need to make sure you have adequate iron. Is there anything in here that helps with that? Or are there other suggestions for the foods that will help bring iron into my diet?

Laura Pole: I was curious to see how much iron is in some of your beans and your nuts and things like that. But another vegetarian source of iron, spinach. So it's not in here but you could put spinach in here and I've done that too and it's very good. But also, I got a box yesterday of this prepared soup and it's carrot, ginger, cashew soup. Heat it up, take some spinach, like baby spinach that's already washed, already prepped. Put it in there and it's a really delicious combination. And all you had to do was heat it and add a little bit of spinach to it.

Diane Z. Quale: And it meets all those needs in terms of the elements that I need prior to surgery.

Laura Pole: Yeah. And some other iron sources, maybe Jill you could speak to that. I mean is this a time when it would be okay to have a little bit of red meat?

Jill Hamilton-R: Absolutely. And your carrot soup also would have beta carotene, which will be synthesized into vitamin A and vitamin A is also really important for the immune system.

Laura Pole: And by the way, I found out that vitamin C helps you absorb iron.

Jill Hamilton-R: Yes, absolutely.

Diane Z. Quale: Drink up. So Laura, I also know that one of your favorite recipes, and I think Jill, it's one of your too, has a salmon patty. Can you tell us a little bit about that and how that might be helpful at this stage as well?

Laura Pole: Yeah so Jill and I really love this. It's got canned salmon, it's got mashed sweet potatoes. It's got curry and a little extra turmeric to it and some other seasonings. But those are the main ingredients. And then we make this little tartar sauce. And again, with the taste, the metallic taste that people might have or just things taste like cardboard or whatever, that tartness of that tartar sauce is great. And you might want to talk a little bit more about the value of the salmon and the sweet potatoes.

Jill Hamilton-R: Yeah. So of course the salmon would have the protein that we're looking for right before surgery and then those sweet potatoes are slow releasing carbs that would be terrific to have in the days leading up to surgery.

Diane Z. Quale: Okay. All right so we've prepared for surgery and we've had the surgery and we're in the recovery and actually, our new normal phase. What advice can you give patients and their families in terms of post-surgery? What are the things they need to be watching and what things should they be considering to add to their diets?

Jill Hamilton-R: Great question. So getting hydrated after surgery is really important. And not just with water, but electrolytes and making sure that we get people back to normal. Another issue is B12 is at risk of becoming low because we've used part of the small intestine to create a new bladder. And so making sure that there's really great sources of B12 in the diet.

Diane Z. Quale: And what are those? Do I just take B12 vitamins or how do I find my B12?

Laura Pole: I always look to get it in food because I love to eat, so why not? And your body tends to know better what to do with it. So for instance, one of the things we added to this cheesy uncheesy casserole was nutritional yeast. If you smell it, it smells like B vitamins. And so by adding it there we've kicked it up a notch. And there are other sources you might want to mention.

Jill Hamilton-R: Right. Animal sources have B12 as well. After surgery we need to rebuild muscle and protein. And so having muscle meat products after surgery is great. Plant based sources are great too but it's good for people to know those things. And then lastly, thinking about bone health. A long term complication could also be not getting enough vitamin D and calcium and magnesium, three nutrients that are really important for good bone health.

Diane Z. Quale: So I always think about vitamin D and calcium and I think dairy. And if I can drink a lot of milk I'll get it. But I know that there are other sources in foods for vitamin D and calcium. Can you share some with us?

Jill Hamilton-R: One of our favorite foods, it's actually Laura's food but I just enjoy eating it are those salmon patties. And you crush up the canned salmon with the bones in it and that's a great source of those nutrients. The fat soluble vitamins as well as calcium. Eggs, that you talked about, that's a great source of vitamin D as well. And we've talked about lots of different sources of magnesium that will hopefully help people out.

Diane Z. Quale: And with after surgery and I have my new bladder of some kind, hydration... What do I need to know and how much do I need to have?

Jill Hamilton-R: Yeah, that's a great question. So we talked a little bit about this in our other video, that taking your body weight in half and consuming that in ounces. It could be little different after this surgery though. So just doing the best you can, staying on top of hydration, not letting yourself get thirsty or get dry. And then using things like soups, you want to talk about ...

Diane Z. Quale: The Magic Mineral Broth.

Laura Pole: Yes. It's really great. This is a recipe created by Chef Rebecca Cats. She's written several books. One is called The Cancer Fighting Kitchen. And from that I have this recipe called Magic Mineral Broth. And it contains everything but bones in it. So it's a vegetarian alternative to having a strong mineral dense liquid and the vegetable combination plus adding kombu, which is a sea vegetable, which is high in so many minerals. And it's delicious. So you make the soup, make a lot of it if you're going to do it, or the broth. And you could freeze some if you have leftovers. And then use some for your soup. In this casserole I used it in mixing up the cream. So we use it in there, so it's going to really help with the flavor. Some people will eat a broth when they're rehydrating themselves after they've

been nauseated or have diarrhea. You could actually sip on it. I use it as my prep liquid before a colonoscopy. I mean, it's that good and it's so balanced.

Diane Z. Quale: So you mentioned making a big pot of it and putting it in the freezer. So for people who are going through surgery or preparing for surgery, and I know that when you get home from the hospital, sometimes the last thing you want to think about is making food. So do you have some advice for our community on what people can do in advance so that when they come home they can have healthy food waiting for them or at least available to them?

Laura Pole: Well we mentioned those salmon patties. Whenever I cook I always make more than what I'm going to eat in the next day or two of that food. And I will freeze it. So the salmon patties freeze very well. Soups freeze very well. A lot of chicken, all of those things can freeze very well and if you have it already prepared and you put it in the freezer, then you just take it out and defrost it, heat it up. So that's one thing you can do. The other thing is you can take up your friends and your family on their offers when they say, "Is there anything? I'd do anything for you." And most of the time we turn them down but this is something you can give them to do and they can either make food for you then or they can make it ahead and freeze it and you have it.

Diane Z. Quale: Well I want to thank you Jill and Laura so much for joining me today. I think it's been a great conversation and I know it's going to be a great help to the members of our community. And thank you, all of you, for watching us today. Laura has so generously offered to put her wonderful recipes online for us so they are available on BCAN's website along with a list of resources where you can find more information about bladder cancer diet and nutrition. And perhaps even find an oncology dietician or nutritionist in your area to help you as well. Thank you very much for joining us for this conversation about bladder cancer.

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