

Summer Savvy: How to Stay Hydrated While Undergoing Radiation

Tips on cool drinks and no-cook meals from our registered dietitian

August 4, 2026 By Fred Hutch News Service and Laura Martinell, RD

Summer harvests guarantee an abundance of hydrating foods that can help keep us cool during the hot months — and these foods are exactly what your body needs during radiation therapy. On hot days, especially if you are physically active, your body might require even *more* fluids than usual. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

Staying Hydrated with Foods

Radiation therapy can increase fatigue and affect your appetite and ability to stay hydrated, depending on your treatment or tumor site. Sometimes, cancer therapy can affect your sense of taste or make your mouth or throat more sensitive, so it can be difficult to drink enough water. These foods contain plenty of liquid and may help to meet the fluid — and calorie — goals recommended by your provider:

- Watermelon is naturally sweet and more than 90% water. It can be eaten in small bites or blended and consumed as a drink.
- Cucumbers are a hydrating and refreshing snack and can be paired with your favorite dip (for example hummus or yogurt dips).
- Fruit-infused waters are easy to make and refreshing: simply add berries, mint, lemon — if your mouth isn't too sensitive — or any preferred fruit to water for a tastier way to get your fluids. You can also find many premade options at the store; just be sure to check the ingredients for anything that could interfere with treatment.
- Popsicles are easy to make with yogurt or your choice of milk (dairy or non-dairy) along with your favorite fruits. Freeze them in ice cube trays or popsicle molds. Real fruit popsicles are a great way to soothe a sore mouth while also providing additional calories.

Cool and No-Cook Meals for Low Energy Days

When fatigue hits and cooking feels like too much work, cold meals can be a great option. These meals require no stove, no oven and only minimal effort!

- Parfaits: yogurt or cottage cheese bowls topped with berries.
- Salads with soft vegetables and cheese or pasta salads from the deli counter.
- Cold/chilled soups like gazpacho – grab one from the store to make it as easy as possible.
- Smoothies

Cold foods and mild flavors often beat hot and strong-flavored foods during treatment. And it's perfectly fine to temporarily lean on things like smoothies, popsicles and fruit as a way to increase hydration as long as you get enough calories.

Getting adequate calories and fluid matters more during treatment than a perfectly balanced plate. Once you've recovered from treatment, your registered dietitian can help you return to a more balanced meal plan.

Always check with your registered dietitian and care team about your specific nutrition needs during your treatment.

Cool and hydrating recipes from Fred Hutch's healthy eating website, [Cook for your Life](#):

- [Watermelon Gazpacho with Mint and Feta](#)
- [Cucumber granita](#)
- [Greek Pasta Salad](#)
- [Orange Mint Twist](#)
- [Coconut Cardamom Popsicles](#)

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