

Welcome to Yale Cancer Center Answers with your hosts doctors Francine Foss, Anees Chagpar and Steven Gore. Dr. Foss is a Professor of Medicine in the Section of Medical Oncology at Yale Cancer Center. Dr. Chagpar is Associate Professor of Surgical Oncology and Director of the Breast Center at Smilow Cancer Hospital and Dr. Gore is Director of Hematological Malignancies at Smilow. Yale Cancer Center Answers features weekly conversations about the research diagnosis and treatment of cancer and if you would like to join the conversation, you can submit questions and comments to canceranswers@yale.edu or you can leave a voicemail message at 888-234-4YCC. This week you will hear a conversation about healthy eating for the holidays with Maura Harrigan. Maura is a Registered Dietitian for the Adult Survivorship Clinic at Yale Cancer Center. Here is Dr. Anees Chagpar. Chagpar Maura, let us start off by talking about what a dietitian is in the Survivorship Clinic. I thought survivorship was about getting over the treatment of cancer. Maura It is, and people come to survivorship saying, "What do I do next? I have been in good hands all through my treatment. I have done everything I have been told to do. Now I am told I am well." Chagpar I am cancer free? Maura I am cancer free, go forth in wellness, and oftentimes they will describe it as falling off a cliff and don't know what to do now. One of the biggest questions is, "what do I eat or what don't I eat?" Chagpar And does that make a difference? That is a question I get a lot of too, "what did I eat to cause my cancer and what should I eat and what shouldn't I eat? How should we be answering those questions?" Maura People come to the Survivorship Clinic with those questions and often they express a fear of food, that something they ate did cause their cancer or something they will eat will cause the cancer to return and I work very supportively with them to ensure them that it is really the overall eating pattern. There is no one food that is going to trigger a response like that. It is an overall pattern of eating in combination with moving your body, so it is good nutrition and exercise that creates an internal hormonal environment that supports wellness, so we do that going forward and that really resonates with them because it is a window of opportunity for many of these patients to make a change that they have probably been meaning to do all along. Chagpar Yeah, I get that a lot, "okay now that I am cancer free, I am going to eat better, exercise, lose weight, and stop smoking..." fill in the blank here, so what advice do you give people in terms of making that change, in terms of how to go forth in wellness? Maura First, we try to figure out where they are at, where they are starting from. Oftentimes there are many good things that they are already doing, so we want to acknowledge that. It does not have to be a major overhaul. It is often the small targeted changes that add up over time that are sustainable that add up to big health benefits, so we try to make it doable and people respond to that. 3:40 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3> that. I like them to leave saying, "oh, I can do this." Something as simple as making some extra time in the morning to actually eat some breakfast even if it is peanut butter on toast and a banana, just that little change can make a big difference in their day, and that is one

example of many.Chagpar So breakfast really is the most important meal of the day?Maura It is.Chagpar And my Diet Coke does not cut it?Maura No.Chagpar Okay, what other tips do you have for people?Maura That eating throughout the day is important. How you eat is just as important as what you eat, so starting the day with food, not Diet Coke is very important and that sets the stage for the day and eating frequently throughout the day, fueling the body as you go through the day, makes a huge difference in terms of your energy level because remember, fatigue, that cancer-related fatigue, is the number one complaint of survivors who come to our clinic, so by eating small frequent meals throughout the day, it helps to take the edge off that fatigue. People will start saying, "hey I feel better" and when you feel better, everything else becomes a little easier to do.Chagpar When you say eating frequently throughout the day, especially to get over fatigue, a lot of people especially around the holidays will gravitate towards the bowl of M&Ms or the chocolate that is over on the counter and that can give them an energy high, but I suspect that that is not the kind of eating throughout the day that you are talking about.Maura No, that is exactly the type of eating on the fly, unprepared, that we are trying to discourage because what happens with that type of eating, you do get a spike in your blood sugar and you get a burst of energy and then comes the crash which makes the fatigue worse, so it is really going through the day I say eating defensively, coming armed, which means bringing food with you, bringing fruit with you, bringing nuts, bringing small portable items like individual hummus, guacamole, really fun foods that are now available in individual portable packages and having that with you in your desk, in your briefcase and snacking on those foods, so you try to avoid becoming too hungry and that is often a habit people fall into. They allow themselves to become too hungry and then they are ravenous and then they gravitate towards something quick and sweet, which then just sets off that cycle again.Chagpar So what about people saying, "I thought guacamole and nuts were fattening, I thought that is not what I am supposed to be eating."Maura That is a great question and I encounter that all the time. Yes, they do contain fat but it is the type6:42 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3>of fat that is important. It is the type of fat that is heart healthy fat, so they are more mono and saturated fats. So while we try to lower our overall fat intake, we want to promote the heart healthy fats, nuts and guacamole are perfect for that and that is part of what we promote in a predominantly plant based way of eating that a lot of your fats and proteins come from plant foods which supports heart health which we know is a concern as a late effect of cancer treatment.Chagpar Does it make a difference what you combine things with? Some people say that if you have a fat, you have to have a carbohydrate and a protein at the same time and they have to be in this combination, it gets a little bit confusing, all of the stuff that is out there. How do we actually figure out what we should be eating?Maura I agree. There is a lot of confusion out there and misinformation and that is often the number one issue I have to deal with in the Survivorship Clinic. It

is kind of undoing and demystifying this misinformation. One thing is I try to have people stay off the internet and also be careful about what well meaning family and friends tell them. We know how to eat well and yes eating a proper combination of foods does help, but it is not that difficult. I usually say never eat one food alone, always match it up with something. Have fruit and nuts, vegetable and cheese, just do not go for the bag of chips. The bag of chips alone, you will keep eating those chips and you will never be satisfied. You will keep eating it because you are not getting the nutrients that you need to your body, your brain is telling you to continue to seek food. Now you have heard that expression, “bet you can’t eat just one”. There is science behind that which is exploiting our biology, so just a simple combination of putting fruit with a protein, fruit with nuts, fruit with cheese, a vegetable with nuts or cheese makes all the difference in terms of stabilizing your blood glucose levels.

Chagpar: What about calories? Should we be watching calories? Is there a certain calorie count that we should be limiting ourselves to?

Maura: Here I may surprise you. I do not believe in counting calories.

Chagpar: Hmm.

Maura: I believe your body has an innate ability to regulate your intake and what you have to do is cultivate mindful eating practices that connects you back to your internal mechanism that tells you when you are full and also tells you when you are hungry. So you have to start listening to your body and when your body says “I am hungry” you need to eat, you do not ignore it and then while you are eating, you are paying attention and you say, “well, I am satisfied, I can stop now” and your body has this ability to self regulate its own caloric intake. Now this cultivation of mindful eating takes a while, but once you have accomplished it, it is liberating. You never have to count a calorie again.

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Chagpar: I think for many of us, and I will speak for myself, you are eating, you feel satisfied but then you say, “That tasted really good, I am going to finish what is on my plate.” How do you get over that?

Maura: That is a tough one. A lot of that is ingrained habit from the way we were raised, not to waste food, finish what is on your plate, it does take practice, in fact in one of the studies that we run, the LEAN 2 study, we actually use a mindful eating scale where as you are eating you can track your satisfaction and your sense of fullness and it is a number scale but again you are listening to your body and you are sensing, “okay I am satisfied, I am just short of being full” which is like a number 8 on the scale of 0 to 10 and it is that practice of acknowledging it, thinking it, that you do learn “okay, I can stop now and yes, there is food left on my plate.” The next time you learn to serve yourself less.

Chagpar: Tell us a little bit more about this LEAN 2 trial. Many of us think about trials and we have talked about a lot of clinical trials on this show, and we talk about drugs and we talk about therapies whether it is a surgical therapy or a radiation approach or chemotherapy, and looking for improvements in outcome. You are a dietitian, what is this LEAN 2 trial?

Maura: It is a lifestyle intervention for women who have been treated for breast cancer who need to lose weight, who have

a BMI greater than 25. We found that many women in the course of being treated for breast cancer actually gain weight and that weight gain actually increases their risk for recurrence. That is how the study came into being, let's help these women and design an intervention that will help them lose weight through healthy eating and exercise and in the process, let us track biomarkers and see if we can determine what the mechanisms are that healthy eating and weight loss provide and do in the body. Chagpar We know that if you are a breast cancer survivor and you gain weight, you are actually at increased risk of getting your cancer back, or is it you lose weight you prevent that recurrence? Maura Yes. Chagpar That is amazing because that essentially says you can do something really cost effective like eating right and exercising, losing weight and preventing recurrence. That is phenomenal, but I think a lot of people may be listening to the show saying, "We have tried to lose weight." I mean this is the national paradigm, right? We as a nation over the years and everybody has seen the maps of how obese the American population is getting, we keep getting more and more obese and it is difficult to lose weight, so after the break I want to learn whether this intervention actually is helping people lose weight and if you can tell everybody out there whether they are cancer survivors or not what the secret is to losing weight in a step-by-step process that people listening to this show can implement today. We will discuss this right after we take a quick break for a medical14:08 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3>minute. Stay tuned to learn more information about healthy eating and how to lose weight especially around the holidays with my guest, Maura Harrigan. Medical Minute Genetic testing can be useful for people with certain types of cancer that seem to run in their families. Genetic counseling is a process that includes collecting of detailed personal and family history, risk assessment and a discussion of genetic testing options. Only about 5 to 10% of all cancers are inherited and genetic testing is not recommended for everyone. Resources for genetic counseling and testing are available at federally designated comprehensive cancer centers, such as Yale Cancer Center and Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven. The Yale Cancer Center Cancer Genetic Counseling Program is a new frontier in the fight against cancer. The program provides genetic counseling and testing to people at increased risk for hereditary cancer and helps them to make informed medical decisions based on their own personal risk assessment. This has been a medical minute brought to you as a public service by Yale Cancer Center and Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale New Haven. More information is available at yalecancercenter.org. Chagpar Welcome back to Yale Cancer Center Answers. This is Dr. Anees Chagpar and I am joined tonight by my guest, Maura Harrigan. We are talking about healthy eating, weight loss and cancer survivorship especially around the holidays because all of us are looking down the pike now with holiday parties coming up and we know what that means, on average people gain weight over the holidays. Maura here has told us, for those of you who were with us before the break, that gaining weight is really important particularly in cancer survivors because gaining weight actually

increases your risk of recurrence and she is helping breast cancer survivors at Smilow Cancer Hospital lose weight through a trial called LEAN 2 through healthy eating and exercise. The question that I posed to you Maura before the break is, does this intervention really work? Do people actually lose weight because Lord knows many of us have tried to lose weight and it is tough. Maura You gave me a tall challenge to explain a six-month intervention in 14 minutes, but I will do my best. Chagpar Okay. Maura First of all, losing weight is difficult and just acknowledging that is important and also that we live in an environment that discourages weight loss, we live in an environment that discourages physical activity and we are surrounded by cheap, inexpensive, kind of lousy foods. So being in that environment, it is difficult to eat well. So what we try to do in the LEAN 2 study is teach women how to choose well, what it means to eat well and how to do it in an environment that does not support this. Also to set a realistic goal of what is meaningful weight loss, it is surprisingly not as much as you think to get the full medical benefit. With just a 5% weight loss, you can reap significant medical benefits and a 10% weight loss even more and that is our goal in the LEAN 217:32 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3> study, a 10% weight loss from their starting weight, so a 200-pound woman needs to lose 20 pounds in six months and she says “that’s all?” and I say yes, and she says “I can do that.” Chagpar And does she? Maura Yes, many women do, some women get to 5%. Chagpar Still. Maura So far in the study no one has gained weight, so stopping this kind of unrelenting weight gain is job 1. Even in the control group who did not receive the intervention, they did not gain weight, so that says the importance of having a conversation with people that this is important, paying attention to what you eat and moving more matters and just paying attention helps stop the weight gain. Chagpar I think you have got everybody’s attention because I am certain that there are plenty of people out there, me included, who are thinking, 10% weight loss, that would be good, in six months, that would be awesome, especially looking down at six months thinking, that’s bathing suit season. So, how do we get through the holidays and lose 10% by next summer, what is the secret, how do you do it in LEAN 2, how can all of the listeners out there do this? Maura First, the holiday strategy. Chagpar Yes. Maura I tell all the women in LEAN 2, do not try to lose weight during the holidays, take the pressure off yourself. The goal is to prevent weight gain. Remember the holidays are meant to be enjoyed. Do not take the pleasure out of this. There are certain special holiday foods that you want to eat, have it. To answer that question, say, it would not be the holidays if something was missing, fill in the blank. For me, that is pumpkin pie and whipped cream, have it, but the secret is you have to keep moving throughout the season and so one of the goals in the LEAN study is to walk 150 minutes a week. Chagpar 150 minutes a week, so that is 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Maura That is one way to do it or it could be 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes in the afternoon, you can break it up anyway you can. It is just the accumulation of 150 minutes a week, so you do not need to have an hour to get to the gym.

You just need to track your walking and get to 150 minutes. We also give women a pedometer. This is a very powerful little tool. We ask them to wear it and to accumulate 10000 steps a day, that is difficult and that is where women realize how sedentary we really are. Often a typical scenario is two days into wearing the pedometer, I get a phone call and the woman says, "This pedometer is broken. It only registered 800 steps" and I will20:39 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3> say to give it another day and this time go for a walk around the block and the next day, they call and they say, "it's working, I really don't move." So the pedometer really gets you up and moving just steps in the day, taking the stairs, parking farther away. I have one participant who works in the hospital and the way she gets her steps in is she decided that she will take the stairs always, no elevators, and that is all of her activity and she has had a phenomenal result, I would say she has done a 15% weight loss.

Chagpar Wow.Maura Just by working in into her day.

Chagpar So we can eat all of the pumpkin pie and whipped cream we want but we just have to put in 10000 steps a day and 150 minutes a week of walking.

Maura A week of walking. Let me clarify that, I did not say all of the pumpkin pie and whipped cream you want, have a serving and then go for a walk so you have your treats, but that is what they are, they are treats so do not deprive yourself but let's get to the food side of things. Rule 1 is portion size. Portion control trumps everything. So you can have anything, but have it in a healthy amount, which often means looking on the label, seeing what a serving size is, and it is a lot less than you think and most of us become accustomed to very large portions. So job 1 of reducing portion size goes a long way. The next step is to really drill down now and look at the foods that contribute a lot of fat in our diet because that is a very concentrated source of calories. For every gram of fat that you can dig out, you get a big return in terms of reduction in calories. Also it supports heart health, so we give women target fat grams for the day. It can range anywhere from 35 to 55 grams a day depending upon their weight.

Chagpar And so the way that you know how much fat is in something, read the label?

Maura Read the label, it is on the label, it will tell you in a serving size how many grams of fat there are and if you are eating a food that does not have a label that is part of the LEAN protocol, we give you a guide to determine how you could figure that out.

Chagpar Okay.Maura Sometimes you are kind of guessing, but it is still a pretty good guess.

Chagpar We have got it. Activity, portion size, watch the fat, what else?

Maura Next thing, dig out the sugar and that is a big one. So we want to reduce the simple added sugars in our daily intake and I want to differentiate what I mean by simple added sugars. The naturally occurring sugar that you find in fruit does not count, that is all healthy. What we are looking for is sugar that is put into food that was never meant to be there. A prime example would be

a23:44 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3> surprising food, Greek yogurt. A fruited Greek yogurt. When you look at the label and look at how many grams of sugar

there are, it could be 28 g of sugar in that one container, let us think about that, 28 g of sugar, one teaspoon is 4g.Chagpar Wow.Maura So in that container of yogurt, you just had six to seven teaspoons which you would never add to a cup of yogurt that you are having at home, so it is that kind of awareness of added sugars, again on the label, that we are trying to dig out but we put a cap on it. We give ourselves an allowance of about 30 g a day. So if you want your dark chocolate treat, you can have it within that 30 g, but we are looking for those hidden sugar grams and another culprit would be the drinks you get at a Starbucks, the Frappuccino's, loaded with sugars and I really go after those with women and when they start getting rid of those added sugars, that is when they really start feeling better and actually their cravings for sweets start to decline.Chagpar What about the artificial sweeteners? Am I okay with the Diet Coke, are we okay with Splenda, that kind of thing? Please say yes, please say yes.Maura I say yes. I think everything in moderation, one or two servings of artificial sweeteners a day is fine and there are a new generation of sweeteners that are naturally occurring sugars that are just super-concentrated, like Truvia which are really excellent. For anyone who is especially concerned, the Center for Science and Public Interest in their recent nutrition health action newsletter, did a whole piece on artificial sweeteners, so you can go to their website, cspi.org and look at that article.Chagpar As long as they did not take away my Diet Coke, I am okay. Alright, what is next after we get rid of sugars?Maura We add fiber.Chagpar Okay. This does not mean we have to have Metamucil every day, does it?Maura No we have it in beautiful colorful fruits and vegetables.Chagpar Okay.Maura So again we are adding more fiber, the magic number is 30, 30 g of fiber or more a day. So remember it was 30 g of fiber or more a day, 30 g of sugar or less.Chagpar Got it.26:23 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3>Maura So we are always looking at fiber against sugar and even on the label, they are right next to each other, so when you are evaluating a product, you are always looking at how much fiber is in this product versus how much sugar. You want more fiber, less sugar. This is one of the most critical pieces of information you can have when you go food shopping and it starts changing the foods that you buy and it starts changing how you feel.Chagpar Hmm. So people have talked about soluble fiber, insoluble fiber, do we need to worry about that or is it just fiber grams?Maura Fiber grams.Chagpar That makes it simple. Alright, so we have cut our fat, we have cut our sugar, we have added fiber, now what?Maura Now you are good to go. Now what happens is your plate starts to look different. All of a sudden your plate is full of predominantly plant foods, two-thirds of your plate is filled with plant foods, colorful fruits and vegetables. The color is the key. The more color the better. Color is really the visual and the indicator of the phytonutrients that are contained in that food. There are 100s of these phytonutrients in different clusters impart the color, so in order to capture these 100s of phytonutrients just eat by color and in the course of your week eat all the colors of the rainbow, you have then captured 100s

of phytonutrients and these are the compounds which support your body's immune system which is really your first line of defense against all disease and it also helps lower inflammation, so this is where we get into food as medicine, food as healing.Chagpar

Interesting, but the one thing that you have not mentioned, we have mentioned fat, we have mentioned sugar, we have mentioned fiber, you did not say anything about protein. Do we have to worry about protein? Should we be taking in more protein, less protein, how does that work?Maura

It is a good question. We typically as Americans take in way more protein than we need, so in this way of eating, in this predominantly plant based way of eating, we are actually eating less protein and we are actually using meat as a condiment. We are planning the meal around the fruits, the vegetables, the grains and usually the meat as a condiment and then even some days not having animal protein, having plant protein, beans, nut butters, so it is a lower protein diet.Chagpar

We have got all of this down, so in our last minute, tell us about vitamins, yes, no, maybe?Maura

I am coming down on no because if we are eating these beautiful platefuls of colorful fruits and vegetables, mother nature is providing the vitamins in the amounts and in the context and supporting cast members that are needed for absorption and utilization in the body. I do not support use of supplements except in cases where there is a true deficiency.29:37 into mp3 file <http://yalecancercenter.org/podcasts/2014%201207%20YCC%20Answers%20-%20Maura%20Harrigan.mp3>Maura Harrigan is a Registered Dietitian for the Adult Survivorship Clinic at Yale Cancer Center. We invite you to share your questions and comments, you can send them to canceranswers@yale.edu or you can leave a voicemail message at 888-234-4YCC and as an additional resource, archive programs are available in both audio and written format at yalecancercenter.org. I am Bruce Barber hoping you will join us again next Sunday evening at 6:00 for another addition of Yale Cancer Center Answers here on WNPR, Connecticut's Public Media Source for news and ideas.