
CANCER FACTS

National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health
Department of Health and Human Services

Gerson Therapy

Gerson therapy, a dietary approach that has been used by some to treat cancer and other diseases, focuses on the role of minerals, enzymes, hormones, and other dietary factors in restoring health and well-being. The daily regimen calls for drinking 13 glasses of juice prepared from fresh, organic fruits and vegetables, and eating vegetarian meals prepared from organically grown fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Various supplements are given, including an iodine solution called Lugol, Vitamin B-12, potassium, thyroid hormone, an injectable crude liver extract, and pancreatic enzymes. Enemas, including coffee or chamomile enemas, are recommended on a regular basis to detoxify the body. Salt, spices, and aluminum cookware or utensils are not used when preparing food. Gerson therapy was named after Dr. Max B. Gerson, who initially developed this approach to treat his migraine headaches.

Dr. Gerson's therapy first came to public attention in the 1930s as a treatment for a type of tuberculosis. Gerson therapy was later used to treat other conditions, including cancer. In a presentation before a Congressional subcommittee in 1946, Dr. Gerson estimated that about 30 percent of cancer patients treated with his therapy had a favorable response. In 1947, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) reviewed 10 cases submitted by Dr. Gerson. However, because



the patients were also receiving other anticancer treatments, the NCI could not determine whether the patients' condition was due to the Gerson therapy or another treatment. The NCI has not conducted any further evaluation of Dr. Gerson's therapy.

For most cancer patients, nutrition recommendations stress a well-balanced diet that includes a generous amount of fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products. However, general guidelines such as these may have to be modified to meet the specific needs of an individual patient. Patients should talk with their doctor about an appropriate diet to follow. Information about diet during cancer treatment is also available from the Cancer Information Service (see below).

###

Sources of National Cancer Institute Information

Cancer Information Service

Toll-free: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY (for deaf and hard of hearing callers): 1-800-332-8615

NCI Online

Internet

Use <http://cancer.gov> to reach the NCI's Web site.

LiveHelp

Cancer Information Specialists offer online assistance through the *LiveHelp* link on the NCI's Web site.

This fact sheet was reviewed on 12/7/99