

Because the diagnosis of cancer has been so prevalent in the past few years, I see many people struggling with the issue of what to feed their pets. Having been through it myself, I know it can be a matter of trial and error as the pet's appetite changes.

Although I think the idea of a raw diet is a fantastic source of nutrition, I must caution that raw food diets are NOT appropriate for a dog undergoing Chemotherapy. Chemo weakens the immune system and leaves a dog unable to process bacteria that a healthy immune system would have no problem with.

This is a very informative article from the website www.fightingcaninecancer.com.

Connie Roller, Manager

**Canine Cancer Diet & Nutrition:
More Protein, Less Carbs**



Several years ago, Dr. Greg K. Ogilvie, oncologist at [REDACTED] Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and his team conducted intensive research into the dietary needs of canine cancer patients. The results of this research have served as the foundation for the current dietary recommendations for dogs with cancer, and led to the creation of the only commercial dog food clinically proven to improve outcomes for dogs with lymphoma, nasal and oral cancers – Hill's n/d (neoplasia diet).

In short, Dr. Ogilvie's research found that cancer cells easily metabolize simple carbohydrates (including sugar), and use them to produce energy and reproduce. However, tumor cells cannot readily use fats. So, a diet low in carbs and high in quality protein and fats will essentially help to starve the cancer cells and reduce the likelihood of cancer cachexia, or wasting as a result of depleted body fat stores.

Many vets will recommend Hill's n/d for cancer patients because it is clinically proven to improve outcomes, although the clinical results are only confirmed for lymphoma, nasal and oral tumors. Hill's n/d is a prescription diet available through any veterinarian. It has what is thought to be an optimal ratio of proteins (37%), carbs (21%) and fats (32%) as well as additional Omega 3 Fatty Acids in the form of fish oil (7%) and an amino acid called Arginine (3%).

There are some drawbacks to Hill's n/d though, that lead many pet guardians to choose other options. First, it is a relatively expensive diet, especially for larger breeds. Secondly, it only comes in canned formula because of its high fat content. As a result, some picky eaters may not like the taste of it if they have been raised on kibble all their lives. Third, and most importantly to those who wish to feed their dog as naturally as possible, the quality of the ingredients in n/d are not ideal, as animal by-products are used to produce this food.

Fortunately, there are many new commercial foods on the market that are low in carbohydrates and use high quality protein sources while also including healthy ingredients like Omega 3's, probiotics and organic fruits and vegetables. Top quality brands include Innova (Evo), Merrick (Before Grain) and Wysong, although new holistic dog foods are cropping up all the time. The key is to read the ingredients and the nutritional breakdown. Stick to brands that use little to no grain and organic ingredients whenever possible.

Another option, as recommended in his book [**The Natural Vet's Guide to Preventing and Treating Cancer in Dogs**](#), Dr. Shawn Messonnier suggests using a high-quality brand of cat food for your pup with cancer as cat food contains a higher fat content than dog food. Brands he recommends include Eagle Pack, Nature's Variety, Wysong, Innova, California Naturals, Halo and Old Mother Hubbard.

Home cooking for your dog is also a great option, and can be used exclusively, or to supplement whatever commercial brand of dog food you select. The key to home cooking is choosing the best quality ingredients you can afford, and to plan ahead. It's

easy to cook a great meal for your dog while cooking your own family's dinner, or to make a week's worth of food during the weekend when you have more time, and freezing individual portions to use throughout the week. According to Laurie Kaplan, author of [Help Your Dog Fight Cancer](#), her dog Bullet, who successfully beat lymphoma, ate a homemade diet of 75% protein (chicken, beef, turkey, lamb, eggs or even tofu) and 25% vegetables (pulverized, grated or lightly steamed) throughout treatment (along with fish oil and several other supplements), and stayed in remission for the rest of his life.

Vegetables that are great to include in a cancer fighting diet include kale, broccoli, carrots, cabbage and fresh garlic. **Please Note:** Garlic should be used in moderation, as too much can potentially be toxic.

Some pet guardians will also choose to feed a raw diet using these same approximate proportions, as many of us have been convinced of the benefits of raw foods, which naturally contain more enzymes, vitamins and minerals than cooked food. This is a personal preference and the topic for another discussion. The key thing to remember is that no matter what diet you select for your pup, limit simple carbs and toxic chemicals and preservatives as much as possible, and focus on providing high quality protein and fats as the foundation for a good cancer diet. And, make sure your dog enjoys his or her meals!

If at any point in treatment your dog stops eating, or becomes overly finicky about their food, resist the urge to be the food police. Because weight loss and wasting can be such a serious issue in cancer patients, it is usually more important to get your dog to eat something, than to remain too strict about nutrition. Enjoying food is an important part of our companion animals' quality of life, so keep that in mind and don't panic if you need to tempt your dog with an occasional "treat" in order to help him or her maintain a healthy weight, take their medicines/supplements or stay interested and enthusiastic about life.