

THE CANCER-FIGHTING DIET: DAILY / WEEKLY SUPPLEMENT SET-UP

(C.E. Bower, September, 2007)

For the cancer-fighting food program, you'll need to take vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements with specific foods 6 times throughout each day. Because 19 different supplements are involved (a few taken two or three times a day) you'll need to get organized. Organization is especially important when you are a caregiver for someone with cancer, and you will not be around every time the person eats. This is the system I worked out to help my mother, after she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

A. GET AND PREPARE CONTAINERS FOR STORING SUPPLEMENTS

1. At first, I put the tablets and capsules into individual plastic snack bags or new plastic pill bottles (which my pharmacist kindly gave me at no charge). Then I discovered it was faster and easier to set up a week's worth of supplements in advance, in pill organizers. After the initial steps are done (labeling the containers and supplement bottles), it takes only about 15 minutes to set out a full week of supplements. Then they're ready to take, with no further thought or bother.
2. Many different kinds of pill containers are available. A few are shown below. You can find them at any drugstore or online (search for "pill organizer"). Whatever kind you choose, make sure that each compartment is large enough to hold 10 tablets or capsules.



3. I chose the "VitaMinder Seven Day Vitamin Pack" (MEDPort, LLC, Providence, RI), shown in photos below. I like them because they are unmarked, so you can label them however you wish, and the interior compartments close separately. I bought mine at a health food store for \$2.99 each, but later found them online for less (The lowest price I found was \$1.79 each at House of Nutrition Online <http://hono.stores.yahoo.net/vitaminder.html> Shipping is a flat \$5.95 per order). HON also sells vitamins, but they don't discount them as much as some other sellers do.



4. If you choose to use pill organizers, get at least 7 of them (one for each day of the week) with at least 6 compartments in each (for each of the 6 times you will eat each day). I bought 2 extra ones, in case I am late doing a set up.

B. LABEL THE CONTAINERS

1. **Label the outside of the containers.** Using a permanent marker, stickers, masking tape, or a label maker, write the days of the week on the outside of the pill containers—one day per container. If you bought extras, label them “Extra”.



2. **Label the compartments inside each container.** Using a permanent marker, tape, or labels, number the inside compartments from 1 through 6. Leave any extras blank.



C. LABEL THE SUPPLEMENT BOTTLES

I found that it was easier to label the bottles of supplements with numbers corresponding to the eating times when they were needed, rather than trying to sort through them looking for certain ones by name. Refer to the Supplement Checklist in the instructions for the cancer-fighting diet, to see what supplements are taken at each of the 6 eating times.

1. **Mark the bottles.** Using a permanent marker, sticker, or tape, mark the “eating time” number or numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6) on the cap of each supplement bottle. (Use a sticker if the bottle cap is dark.) For example, because folic acid is taken in the morning (#1) and late afternoon (#4), write “1, 4” or “1+4” on the cap of the folic acid bottle. When you’re finished labeling the bottles, you’ll have something that resembles the assortment below.



2. **Store the supplement bottles when not in use.** Store the labeled supplement bottles in a cool dry place (*not in a bathroom*). I keep them in an cardboard box at the top of the basement stairs, but a plastic storage container would probably work better.



C. HOW TO DISPENSE THE SUPPLEMENTS A WEEK AT A TIME

1. Remove the supplement bottles from the storage container, and arrange them in rows on a table, with the highest numbers in the back and the lowest numbers in the front. If a bottle has more than one number, go by the highest number. I do this at the kitchen table.



2. Open the pill containers and interior compartments, and lay them out next to the supplements.



3. Beginning with the bottles with the highest numbers on the labels, dispense the supplements into the compartments with the corresponding numbers. (For example, first take the bottle of Echinacea ("1, 6" on cap) and put one tablet in compartment 6 and one tablet in compartment 1 of each pill container. Close the bottle and return it to the storage box. (I keep the empty box on the floor and drop in the bottles as I go through them, to get them out of the way.)
4. After a compartment has been completed (all supplements added to it, even if it only contains one tablet or capsule) close the compartment. This will help keep you organized and lower the chances of putting supplements into the wrong compartments.
5. Continue dispensing supplements, matching up the numbers on the bottle caps with the numbers on the compartments. Close each compartment when filled, and remove each supplement bottle from the table after you're finished with it.
6. If you take any supplements other than those on the cancer-fighting diet, they can be labeled and added to the containers also. (For example, I put glucosamine/chondroitin capsules for joint pain in compartments 4, and 5 in the picture below.)

Note that the most supplements are taken earlier in the day (at eating times 1 and 2), and fewer are taken as the day goes on.



7. After all the supplements have been dispensed, close all the lids and put the daily containers away. My mother stores here in a kitchen cabinet, takes out one container each morning, and leaves it on the kitchen counter, so she'll have it handy each time she eats.

When you get low on a particular supplement, label a new bottle and replace the empty one. I always order supplements for 3 or 4 months at a time, to avoid running out and getting stuck paying much higher prices at local stores.