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Diet and cancer

Diet can have an impact on your risk of developing many types of cancer. You can reduce your overall risk by following a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Information

DIET AND BREAST CANCER

The link between nutrition and breast cancer has been well studied. To reduce risk of breast cancer the American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that you:

- Get regular physical activity of moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day 5 times a week.
- Maintain a healthy weight throughout life.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Consume at least 2½ cups (300 grams) of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Limit alcoholic beverages to no more than 2 drinks/day for men; 1 drink/day for women. One drink is the equivalent of 12 ounces (360 milliliters) beer, 1 ounce (30 milliliters) spirits, or 5 ounces (150 milliliters) wine.

Other things to consider:

- Data on the role of high soy intake (in the form of supplements) is inconclusive regarding hormone-sensitive cancers in women. Consuming a diet that contains moderate amounts of soy foods before adulthood may be beneficial.
- Breastfeeding may reduce a mother's risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer.

DIET AND PROSTATE CANCER

The ACS recommends the following lifestyle choices to reduce prostate cancer risk:

- Get regular physical activity of moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day five times a week.
- Maintain a healthy weight throughout life.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Consume at least 2½ cups (300 grams) of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Limit alcoholic beverages to no more than 2 drinks/day for men. One drink is the equivalent of 12 ounces (360 milliliters) beer, 1 ounce (30 milliliters) spirits, or 5 ounces (150 milliliters) wine.

Other things to consider:

- Your health care provider may suggest that men limit their use of calcium supplements and not exceed the recommended amount of calcium from foods and beverages.

DIET AND COLON OR RECTAL CANCER

The ACS recommends the following to reduce colorectal cancer risk:

- Limit intake of red and processed meat. Avoid charbroiling meat.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Consume at least 2½ cups (300 grams) of fruits and vegetables daily. Broccoli may be particularly beneficial.
- Avoid excess alcohol consumption.
- Eat recommended amounts of calcium and get enough vitamin D.
- Eat more omega-3 fatty acids (fatty fish, flaxseed oil, walnuts) than omega-6 fatty acids (corn oil, safflower oil, and sunflower oil).
- Maintain a healthy weight throughout life. Avoid obesity and buildup of belly fat.
- Any activity is beneficial but vigorous activity might have an even greater benefit. Increasing the intensity and amount of your physical activity may help reduce your risk.
- Get regular colorectal screenings based on your age and health history.

DIET AND STOMACH OR ESOPHAGEAL CANCER

The ACS recommends the following lifestyle choices to reduce stomach and esophageal cancer risk:

- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Consume at least 2½ cups (300 grams) of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Lower your intake of processed meats, smoked, nitrite-cured, and salt-preserved foods; emphasize plant-based proteins.
- Get regular physical activity of at least 30 minutes a day 5 times a week.
- Maintain a healthy body weight throughout life.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANCER PREVENTION

The American Institute for Cancer Research's 10 recommendations for cancer prevention include:

- Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- Avoid sugary drinks. Limit consumption of calorie-dense foods. (Artificial sweeteners in moderate amounts have not been shown to cause cancer.)
- Eat more of a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes such as beans.
- Limit consumption of red meats (such as beef, pork and lamb) and avoid processed meats.
- If consumed at all, limit alcoholic drinks to 2 per day for men and 1 per day for women.
- Limit consumption of salty foods and foods processed with salt (sodium).

- DO NOT use supplements to protect against cancer.
- It is best for mothers to breastfeed exclusively for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods.
- After treatment, cancer survivors should follow the recommendations for cancer prevention.

RESOURCES

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans -- www.myplate.gov [<https://www.myplate.gov>]
- The American Cancer Society is an excellent source of information on cancer prevention -- www.cancer.gov/ [<https://www.cancer.gov/>]
- The American Institute for Cancer Research -- www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/healthy-eating/new-american-plate/ [<https://www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/healthy-eating/new-american-plate/>]
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics provides sound dietary advice on a wide range of topics -- www.eatright.org/ [<https://www.eatright.org/>]
- The National Cancer Institute is a government gateway to the accurate information on cancer prevention -- www.cancer.gov/ [<https://www.cancer.gov/>]

Alternative Names

Fiber and cancer; Cancer and fiber; Nitrates and cancer; Cancer and nitrates

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