



Nutrition and Cancer Prevention

No single food or food component can protect you against cancer by itself, but a diet filled with a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans and other plant foods helps lower risk for many cancers. Many individual minerals, vitamins, and phytochemicals demonstrate anti-cancer effects. Evidence suggests it is the synergy of compounds in the overall diet that offers the strongest cancer protection, so eating a variety of foods from all foods groups is recommended. The most important thing you can do to prevent cancer is maintain a healthy body weight.

Think about . . .

- Eating foods mostly from plants
- How much food you are eating
- Being physically active
- Maintaining a healthy weight

Eat More of these Foods

Fiber: Dietary fiber is linked with a lower risk of some types of cancer, especially colorectal cancer. Sources of fiber include beans, whole grains, brown rice, popcorn, nuts (such as almonds, pecans, and walnuts), baked potatoes with skin, berries, bran cereal and oatmeal. Increase fiber in your diet slowly to avoid constipation, abdominal cramping and excess gas.

Variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables:

The best source of phytochemicals and antioxidants is a brightly colored or strongly flavored fruits and vegetables. Phytochemicals provide plants with color, odor, and flavor. When you eat them, they have the potential to stimulate the immune system, block carcinogens, reduce inflammation, help regulate hormones, and prevent DNA damage. Sources of phytochemicals include broccoli, green tea, grapes, citrus fruits, carrots, sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cherries and peanuts.

Eat Less of these Foods

Alcohol: Ethanol, the alcohol found in drinks, is a recognized carcinogen that may lead to DNA damage and increased risk of cancer. People who drink alcohol should limit their intake to no more than three drinks per week. A drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1½ ounces of hard liquor.

Meat: Some studies have linked eating large amounts of processed meat and red meat to an increased risk of cancer. This link may be due in part to nitrites, which are added to processed meats, or from compounds in red meat which damage the lining of the intestines. Limit your intake of red meat (lamb, pork, beef) and processed meat (deli meat, hot dogs) to less than two servings per week.

Sugar: There is no strong evidence that directly links sugar to increased cancer risk, yet there is an indirect link. Sugar increases calorie intake without providing any of the nutrients. By promoting obesity, a high sugar intake may indirectly increase cancer risk. Limiting foods such as cakes, candy, cookies, and sweetened cereals, as well as sugar-sweetened drinks such as soda and sports drinks can help reduce calorie intake.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I take supplements that contain cancer fighting ingredients?

Nutrients are best absorbed through the foods you eat rather than through supplements. Ask your health care provider before you take any supplements or extra vitamins. These products can be dangerous for some patients.

Is it better to eat organic foods?

Several studies have looked at the nutrient content of organic versus conventionally grown fruits or vegetables. While some studies suggest a higher nutrient content, others suggest no difference. It is not known if the nutritional differences that have been reported would result in health benefits such as a reduced cancer risk. Vegetables, fruits and whole grains should form the central part of your diet, regardless of whether they are grown conventionally or organically.

Local Resources

Wilmot Cancer Center

Outpatient Nutrition Counseling

This resource, which includes specially trained oncology dietitians, is open to all Wilmot Cancer Institute patients.
(585) 275-5823

Healthy Living Center for Community Health

This community-based fitness and health education program is offered by the Center for Community Health & Prevention.
(585) 530-2050

Cooking for Wellness at Gilda's Club

This free monthly cooking class is led by a Wilmot oncology nutritionist and offered in collaboration with the Pluta Cancer Center Foundation and Gilda's Club Rochester.
(585) 423-9700

Online Resources

American Institute for Cancer Research

www.aicr.org

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov

Contact Us

Hereditary Cancer Screening and Risk Reduction Program

Wilmot Cancer Institute

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www.urmc.rochester.edu/cancer-institute/services/hereditary-cancer-risk.aspx