

# Nutrition and Cancer Prevention

Some foods increase the risk of cancer, while others support the body and strengthen the immune system. By making smart food choices, you can protect your health, feel better and boost your ability fight off disease.

## **Tip #1: Focus on plant-based foods**

The best diet for preventing cancer is a predominantly plant-based diet that includes a variety of vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Plants have less fat, more fiber and more cancer-fighting nutrients. These three elements work together to support your immune system and help your body fight off cancer.

Simple ways to add plant-based foods to your diet:

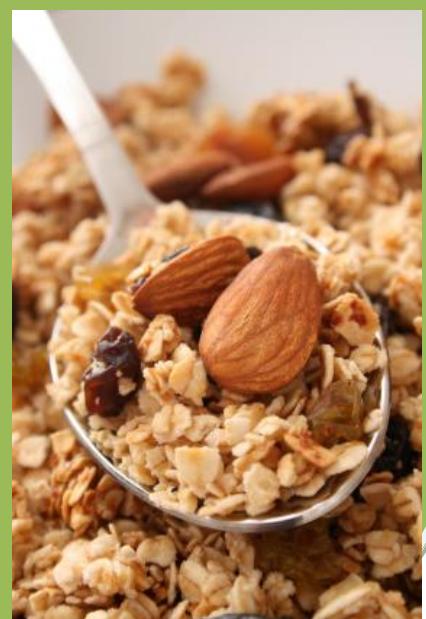
- Aim for a plate of food that is filled at least two-thirds with whole grains, vegetables, beans or fruit.
- Focus on adding “whole” foods, which are foods close to their original form.
- Try to minimize or reduce the amount of processed foods.
- Add fruit and a few seeds or nuts to your whole grain breakfast cereal.
- Eat a big salad filled with your favorite beans, peas or veggies.
- Order whole grain bread for sandwiches.
- Add fresh or frozen veggies to pasta sauce or rice.
- Top a baked potato with broccoli and yogurt, sautéed veggies or salsa.
- Replace creamy pasta sauces, with sautéed vegetables or tomato sauce made with olive oil.

## **Tip #2: Bulk up on fiber**

Fiber plays a key role in keeping your digestive system clean and healthy. It helps move cancer-causing compounds out of the body before they can create harm. In general, the more natural and unprocessed the food, the higher it is in fiber.

Simple ways to add more fiber to your diet:

- Use brown rice instead of white rice
- Substitute whole-grain bread for white bread
- Choose a bran muffin over a croissant or pastry
- Snack on popcorn instead of potato chips
- Eat fresh fruit
- Enjoy fresh carrots, celery, or bell peppers with a hummus or salsa
- Use beans instead of ground meat in chili, casseroles, tacos, and even burgers



High-fiber, cancer-fighting foods	
<b>Whole grains</b>	whole-wheat pasta, raisin bran, barley, oatmeal, oat bran muffins, popcorn, brown rice, whole-grain or whole-wheat bread
<b>Fruit</b>	raspberries, apples, pears, strawberries, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, mango, apricots, citrus fruits, dried fruit, prunes, raisins
<b>Legumes</b>	lentils, black beans, split peas, lima beans, baked beans, kidney beans, pinto, chick peas, navy beans, black-eyed peas
<b>Vegetables</b>	broccoli, spinach, dark green leafy vegetables, peas, artichokes, corn, carrots, tomatoes, Brussels sprouts, potatoes

### Tip #3: Cut down on meat

Meat lacks fiber and other nutrients that have been shown to have cancer-protective properties. Meat is also high in saturated fat which increases cancer risk.

Making better meat and protein choices:

- Try to keep the total amount of meat to no more than 15% of total calories.
- Eat red meat only occasionally. Red meat is high in saturated fat, so eat it sparingly.
- Reduce the portion size of meat at each meal. The portion should fit in the palm of your hand.
- Choose leaner meats, such as fish, chicken or turkey.
- Avoid processed meats such as hotdogs, sausage, deli meats and salami.

### Tip #4: Choose your fats wisely

Fats that increase cancer risk: Saturated fats (red meat, whole milk dairy, eggs) and trans fats

Fats that decrease cancer risk: Unsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids

Tips for choosing cancer-fighting fats and avoiding the bad

- Reduce your consumption of red meat, whole milk, butter and eggs.
- Cook with olive or canola oil instead of regular vegetable oil.
- Check the ingredient list and avoid anything with hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.
- Trim the fat off of meat and avoid eating the skin.
- Choose nonfat dairy products and eggs that have been fortified with omega-3 fatty acids.
- Use flaxseed oil in smoothies, salad dressings or mixed in snacks such as applesauce. But do not cook with flaxseed oil, as it loses its protective properties when heated.
- Limit fast food, fried foods and packaged foods.
- Eat fish once or twice a week



### **Tip #5: Choose cancer-fighting foods**

Your immune system keeps you healthy by fighting off unwanted invaders in your system, including cancer cells. There are many things you can eat to maximize the strength of your immune system.

Antioxidants are powerful vitamins that protect against cancer and help the cells in your body function optimally. Fruits and vegetables are the best sources of antioxidants such as beta-carotene, vitamin C, vitamin E and selenium.

Eat a wide range of brightly colored fruits and vegetables. Colorful fruits and vegetables are rich in phytochemicals, a potent disease-fighting and immune-boosting nutrient.

Flavor with immune-boosting spices and foods. Garlic, ginger, and curry powder not only add flavor, but they add a cancer-fighting punch of valuable nutrients.

Drink plenty of water. Water is essential to all bodily processes. It stimulates the immune system, removes waste and toxins and transports nutrients to organs.



### **Tip #6: Prepare your food in healthy ways**

Carcinogens are cancer-causing substances found in food. Carcinogens can form during the cooking or preserving process—mostly in relation to meat—and as foods start to spoil. Examples of foods that have carcinogens are cured, dried, and preserved meats, burned or charred meats; smoked foods; and foods that have become moldy.

Here are some ways to reduce your exposure to carcinogens:

- Do not cook oils on high heat. Low-heat cooking or baking (less than 240 degrees) prevents oils or fats from turning carcinogenic. Opt for healthy cooking methods such as baking, boiling, steaming or broiling.
- Go easy on the barbecue. Burning or charring meats creates carcinogenic substances.
- Store oils in a cool dark place in airtight containers.
- Choose fresh meats instead of cured, dried, preserved or smoked meats.
- Avoid foods that look or smell moldy, as they likely contain aflatoxin, a strong carcinogen.
- Use waxed paper rather than plastic wrap to cover food in the microwave.
- Always use microwave safe containers.

**Provided by the Riverview Hospital Wellness  
Team**