



Nutrition Recommendations for Breast Cancer Patients



Introduction

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women worldwide. Survival rates have improved due to early diagnosis and improvement in treatment strategies. There are more than 3.8 million breast cancer survivors in the United States, including women still being treated and those who have completed treatment.

Following a healthy lifestyle, including a healthy diet and physical activity, is important for breast cancer prevention and reducing risk of recurrence. Breast cancer survivors are also at higher risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity and other cancers, which can be influenced by lifestyle.

The information reviewed comes primarily from the American Institute of Cancer Research Continuous Update Project, which evaluated the scientific research worldwide on how diet, weight and exercise affect breast cancer risk. The report analyzed 119 studies, including data on 12 million women and 260,000 cases of breast cancer.

Limit alcohol

- Drinking alcohol, in any form, raises breast cancer risk.
- Alcohol is a known carcinogen (anything that has the ability to cause cancer) and affects blood levels of estrogen and other hormones.
- There is strong evidence that drinking one serving of alcohol daily increases premenopausal breast cancer risk by 5% and postmenopausal breast cancer risk by 9%.
- Findings from studies on alcohol and breast cancer recurrence and survival are mixed.

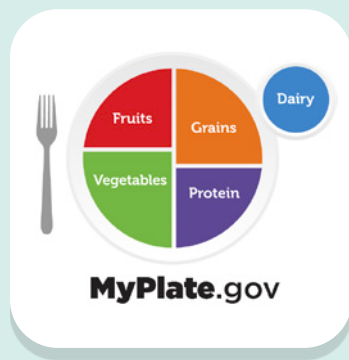


Maintain a healthy weight

- Being overweight or weight gain after menopause and/or a breast cancer diagnosis increases risks for postmenopausal breast cancer and breast cancer recurrence.
- Fat tissue is related to a number of hormones and growth factors, such as estrogen and insulin, which have been shown to promote the growth of cancer cells.
- Losing as little as 5-10% of your weight can improve your overall health and reduce risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Tips for maintaining a healthy weight

- Eat three meals a day and plan healthy snacks.
- Drink plenty of water and avoid drinks with added sugars, such as soda, sweetened teas and lemonade.
- Pick lean meats (chicken, turkey and fish) and low fat dairy instead of higher fat protein choices.
- Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains for good sources of fiber, which aid in feeling more satisfied.
- Limit alcohol.
- Use lower fat cooking methods, such as baking, broiling, roasting and boiling, instead of frying.
- Eat high calorie foods, such as pizza, French fries, fast food and rich desserts, less often.



Visit **MyPlate.gov** for a helpful tool and guide for achieving the diet that fits you.

Make physical activity a daily habit

Be moderately physically active, about the same as walking for at least 30 minutes every day. To have a greater impact on weight control, a higher level of activity is needed, such as 45 to 60 minutes every day.

- Physical activity, independent of weight loss, reduces risk of premenopausal and postmenopausal breast cancer, improves survival and reduces risk of recurrence in breast cancer survivors.
- Weight bearing and strength training exercise is recommended for preserving muscle mass and bone health in breast cancer survivors.



Guidelines for a healthy diet

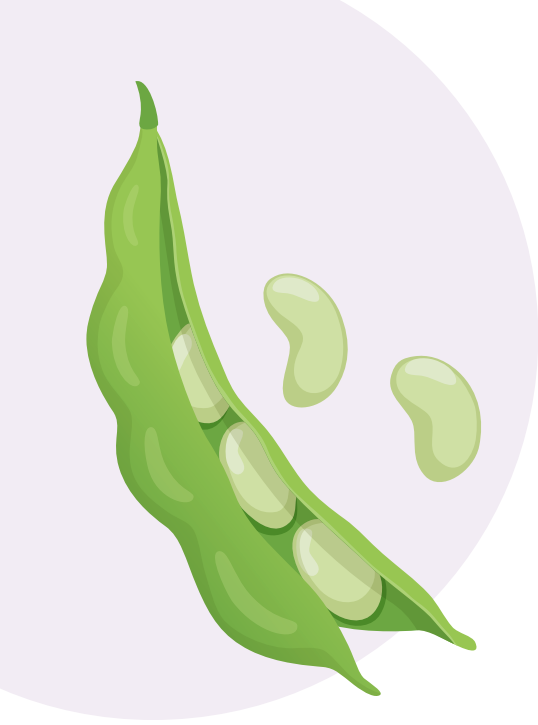
Plant-based diet

A plant-based diet is linked to a lower risk for many cancers.

A plant-based diet can help support a healthy weight, which can decrease risk of breast cancer and its recurrence. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds have antioxidants and phytochemicals which have been shown to be protective against breast cancer through a variety of anti-cancer actions. Fiber and foods containing soy have some evidence to support a decreased risk of recurrence after a breast cancer diagnosis.

- Aim for at least five servings per day of fruits and vegetables. Select a variety of colors.
 - » One serving = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable, 1 cup leafy green vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried fruit, 6 ounces vegetable or fruit juice.
- Women who eat high amounts of fiber have lower risk of breast cancer and improved survival of breast cancer.
 - » Fiber is found in whole fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, legumes, and nuts and seeds.
 - » A high fiber diet may reduce breast cancer by controlling blood sugar levels and decreasing estrogen levels, which is important for hormone-sensitive cancers.
 - » Limit refined starchy foods and added sugars. These foods tend to be low in fiber and can increase risk for weight gain.





- Eating soy foods may protect against hormone-dependent cancers. Current evidence suggests no increased risk for consuming soy foods on recurrence and survival, and there is a potential for synergistic effect with tamoxifen.
 - » Examples of soy foods: tofu, edamame, soy milk
- Green tea is a rich source of antioxidants. A meta-analysis showed reduced risk of recurrence with 3 cups of green tea daily.

Healthy Proteins

- Limit intake of red meat to less than 12 to 18 ounces per week.
- Avoid processed meat. Examples of processed meats are bacon, salami and hot dogs.
- Choose low fat dairy products.
- Choose plant-based proteins, such as soy, beans, nuts and seeds, skinless poultry and seafood more often.
- Avoid high heat cooking methods. Prepare meat by baking, broiling or poaching rather than by frying or charbroiling.

Healthy Fats

- A high fat diet can affect weight, as well as heart disease risk.
- Studies show improved survival from breast cancer with a lower fat diet, especially saturated fats.

- Data from the Women's Healthy Eating and Living study showed omega-3 fats from fish sources reduced recurrence and mortality.
- Limit saturated and animal fats found in red meat, poultry skin and full-fat dairy products.
- Add sources of omega-3 fats found in fatty fish, such as salmon, sardines, trout and herring. Plant sources of omega-3 include flaxseed, chia seeds, walnut, hemp seeds and pumpkin seeds.



Other Nutrients

- Calcium and Vitamin D
 - » Women who have had breast cancer treatment may be at increased risk for osteoporosis and fracture.
 - » The recommended daily intake for calcium is 1,000 to 1,200 mg per day between food sources, fortified foods and supplements.
 - » Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to higher risk of breast cancer. Adequate vitamin D is important for calcium absorption.
 - » Include sources of vitamin D in your diet: sunlight, fatty fish, fortified foods and supplements.

Sources

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3. National Institute of Health. What Breast Cancer Survivors Need to Know About Osteoporosis. NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases National Resource Center Website. November, 2018. Accessed October 2020. <https://www.bones.nih.gov/health-info/bone/osteoporosis/conditions-behaviors/osteoporosis-breast-cancer>
4. Atoum M, Alzoughool F. Vitamin D and Breast Cancer: Latest Evidence and Future Steps. Breast Cancer (Auckl). 2017;11:1178223417749816. Published 2017 Dec 20.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade: 6.2
Flesch Reading Ease Score: 64.6 (Standard - Grade 7-8)



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