

PATIENT EDUCATION

Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

You probably already know that eating well and staying active can promote overall health and a sense of well-being. But did you know that making those same changes may also help keep cancer from returning?

Your nutritional needs are key to your well-being. For cancer prevention, good nutrition has also been found to help fend off both recurrence and secondary cancers. Here are some cancer prevention recommendations that combine both good nutrition, weight control and exercise.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

Maintain a healthy weight by staying within your healthy range.

- Avoid weight gain. Find your healthy range by calculating your body mass index (BMI). A healthy BMI range should be maintained at every age — childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
- Body fat in the waistline acts like a hormone pump, releasing insulin, estrogen and other hormones into the bloodstream. This hormone-releasing action can spur cancer growth.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Be physically active as part of everyday life.

- Be moderately physically active, equivalent to brisk walking for at least 30 minutes every day.
- As fitness improves, aim for a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate — or 75 minutes of vigorous — physical activity every week.
- Limit sedentary habits.
- To have a significant impact on weight control, a higher level of activity is needed, such as 45 to 60 minutes every day.
- Children and teenagers (5 to 17 years of age) are advised to have 60 minutes of daily activity.

HEALTHY DIET

Base all your meals on plant foods.

- Aim to fill at least two thirds/more than half of your plate with vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans. You should eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruits daily.
- Plant foods contain vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. These compounds can help protect cells in the body from damage that can lead to cancer.
- Plant-based foods have less calories, which can also help maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat relatively unprocessed cereals (grains) and/or legumes with every meal.
- Limit refined starchy foods.

PROCESSED FOODS

Limit processed foods to control calorie intake and maintain a healthy weight.

- Limit consumption of “fast foods” and other processed foods high in fat, starches or sugar.
- Limit consumption of sugar sweetened drinks.

RED AND PROCESSED MEATS

Limit intake of red meat and avoid processed meat.

- People who eat red meat should consume modest amounts — 12 to 18 ounces (cooked) per week, very little, if any, of it processed.

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Limit alcoholic drinks.

- If alcoholic drinks are consumed, limit consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Aim to meet nutritional needs through diet alone.

- Dietary supplements are not recommended for cancer prevention.

BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding aids in cancer prevention.

- For women, breastfeeding may lower the risk of pre/postmenopausal breast cancer. It can also help lower the risk of ovarian cancer by preventing ovulation.
- Health benefits and cancer risk reduction are greater if you are able to breastfeed for at least six months or more.
- Breast milk gives your baby all the energy and nutrients to develop and stay healthy.
- Breastfeeding is good for mother and baby.

And always remember — do not smoke or chew tobacco.

If you currently smoke or use tobacco, ask your physician about ways to quit.

Source: World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research: Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer. A Global Perspective. Washington, D.C.



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