Reducing Your Cancer Risk Through Nutrition

You can reduce your risk of cancer by as much as 30 percent by eating a healthy plant-based diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight. When you eat, try to fill two-thirds of your plate with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. Limit the amount of fish, poultry, meat and dairy products to only one-third of your plate.

Physical activity may reduce your risk for being overweight or obese. Body fatness has been shown to increase your risk for cancers such as colorectal, breast (postmenopausal), endometrial, esophageal, pancreatic and kidney.

Eat Fruits and Vegetables Every Day

This is easier than you may think – just try to eat one or more cups at every meal and snack. Aim for three and one-half to five cups of vegetables and fruit daily with more from vegetables than fruit. Some examples are:

- Fruit on cereal for breakfast.
- A salad that includes fresh vegetables with dressing on the side with lunch and dinner.
- Vegetable sticks (carrots, peppers, cucumbers) or fruit with a meal or as an afternoon snack.
- Whole grain pasta with tomato and mushroom sauce for dinner.

MyPyramid.gov, a website of the United States Department of Agriculture, provides information about portion sizes of vegetables and fruits. For more information on portion sizes, visit:

- http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/vegetables_counts.html (vegetable portion sizes)
- http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/fruits_counts.html (fruit potion sizes)

Fruits and vegetables contain phytochemicals. Phytochemicals are substances found in plants that fight diseases, such as cancer. Often, plants that are the same color have the same healthy phytochemicals. Adding a variety of color to your diet is an easy way to make sure you are eating different phytochemicals, because one phytochemical may not be protective of all cancers.

The phytochemicals in the following table have been shown to help prevent cancer. They are listed by color.

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Color Group	Foods	Phytochemical
Red	Tomatoes, watermelon, pink grapefruit	Lycopene
Red/Purple	Grapes, eggplant, plums, blueberries	Anthocyanins
Orange	Sweet potato, carrots, apricot, mangos	Beta carotene
Orange/Yellow	Nectarine, orange, pineapple	Beta-cryptothanxin
Yellow/Green	Spinach, avocado, corn	Lutein
Green	Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts	Indole
White/Green	Garlic, onion, celery, pears	Quercetin

Make Healthy Food Choices

- Look for foods that list whole grains as the first ingredient – such as whole-wheat flour, rolled-oats or whole meal rye.
- Limit refined carbohydrates, including cakes, pastries and sugary drinks.
- Limit yourself to 18 ounces or less a week of red meat (beef or pork). Choose fish, poultry or beans as an alternative.
- Prepare meat, fish and poultry by baking, broiling or poaching rather than frying or charbroiling.
- Limit salt in your diet. Avoid salty, processed and preserved foods, such as deli ham and bologna.
- When you go out to eat, choose wisely to reduce extra calories. Many restaurants serve large portions that can be shared by two people. Or save half of the meal for lunch the next day.
- When reading a label, remember that low-fat, fat-free, reduced sugar or sugar-free do not always mean low calorie.

Better Attitudes About Eating

Today's fast-paced culture often encourages us to view food as "necessary fuel" during a busy day or a tempting treat that we may regret later. While we do gain energy and enjoyment from what we eat, we must remember that all foods will either feed the body or drag it down. Try to adopt the following healthy food attitudes and behaviors:

- **Pay attention to signs of feeling hungry and full.** Allow your body to guide your decisions about when and how much to eat, rather than being swayed by tempting advertisements or a busy schedule.
- **Choose healthfully.** View meal times as opportunities to fill your body with disease-fighting and health-promoting foods. Aim for two-thirds of your meal or snack to come from a plant source, such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and whole grains.
- **Savor your food.** Eating slowly will increase your enjoyment of foods and help prevent overeating.
- **Focus on your meal.** Avoid eating while driving or performing other activities since this may cause you to make unhealthy food choices and overeat.

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Limit Alcohol Consumption

If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation. Drinking has been linked to breast, colon, esophageal, head and neck and liver cancers. When combined with smoking, it greatly increases the risk of head and neck cancer. People who drink alcohol should limit their intake to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink a day for women. A serving is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of 80 proof alcohol.

For More Information

If you have questions about your personal nutrition needs, ask your health care provider to make an appointment with the dietitian for you.

For more information, ask your health care provider for the patient information sheets "Determine Your Healthy Weight: Lower Your Risk for Major Health Problems," "Fat Facts – Level 2" and "Reducing Your Cancer Risk Through Physical Activity."

MD Anderson Cancer Center – Prevention
http://www.mdanderson.org/prevention
Calculate your personal cancer risk and learn about early detection and current research on preventing cancer.

The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR)
http://www.aicr.org
Find tips on eating healthy, a recipe corner, information on foods that fight cancer and much more.

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