



Preventing Cancer through Proper Nutrition

Did You Know?

The American Cancer Society reports that 1 out of every 3 cancer deaths in the United States is attributed to a poor diet, physical inactivity, or being overweight or obese.

These factors are linked to an increased risk for many cancers such as cancer of breast, colon and rectum, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, and pancreas.

Cancer Risk Factors

There are many risk factors for cancer. Some risk factors may be *unavoidable* such as genetics or environmental factors. However, some risk factors are *avoidable* such as smoking, consumption of certain food-related compounds, and being overweight or obese.

Risk factors, whether avoidable or unavoidable, lead to the production of free radicals in the body, which can lead to cell damage and potentially cancer. However, research shows that one may prevent such damage to cells by keeping physically active and making healthful food choices. Additionally, research shows that the relationship between body weight and cancer are highly connected, so maintaining a healthy weight can also help to reduce the risk of cancer.

Tips for Cancer Prevention

- ❖ **Limit saturated fat, processed meat, and red meat-** Research suggests that these factors may raise the risk for cancer. In addition to increasing overall calories that can lead to weight gain, saturated fat and processed meat can also cause the body to produce carcinogenic (cancer causing) compounds.

Tips to reduce processed meat and red meat:

- Use meat as a side dish, in small portions.
- Consume lean meats like fish and skinless poultry.
- Consume alternative protein sources like beans and legumes.

Tips to reduce saturated fat:

- Use vegetable oils instead of solid fats.
- Purchase fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
- Trim fat and skin from meat.
- Limit fried foods.
- Pay attention to fat content on food labels.

Tips for Cancer Prevention (*continued*)

- ❖ **Decrease salt-cured and charred foods (smoked, charcoal, gas-broiled, high-temperature frying or broiling)**- Because of the way they are prepared, these foods can contain cancer causing properties which may lead to an increased risk for cancer, especially if eaten in large amounts.

Tips to reduce charred foods:

- Cover the grill with aluminum foil to protect food from smoke and fire.
- Cook meat only until done, avoid charring.
- Remove charred portions before eating.
- Pre-cook foods in microwave to decrease grilling time.

- ❖ **Increase fruits, vegetables, and whole-grains**- Foods of plant origin are naturally low in calories, rich in dietary fiber, and contain cancer preventing compounds known as phytochemicals or antioxidants. The dietary fiber found in foods of plant origin helps move food through the digestive tract more quickly, which may help reduce the risk for cancer. Fruits and vegetables (especially those bright in color) contain antioxidants and other phytochemicals that help protect the body from cell damage- aiding in cancer prevention.
- ❖ **Limit alcoholic beverages**- Drinking more than one alcoholic beverage per day for women and more than two for men increases the risk for many types of cancer. Though the exact relationship between alcohol and cancer is still unclear, the amount of alcohol (not the type) is thought to influence the risk for cancer. All alcohol should be consumed in moderate amounts.
- ❖ **Be physically active**- Regular physical activity is important for healthy weight maintenance and cancer prevention. It is important to engage in moderate physical activity at least five days a week, 30 minutes a day. Keeping your whole body active keeps it stronger and in better condition to fight off disease and cell damage.

