

Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

Diet and Cancer Prevention Basics

Eating well is one thing you can do to help lower your risk of getting cancer. Healthy eating in combination with regular physical activity can also help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight, which may be one of the most important ways to protect against cancer.

There are many recommendations for reducing cancer risk. Start with one change and move from there. Even small changes that you make in your diet and activity level will provide some benefit in decreasing cancer risk.



Steps you can take

To decrease your risk of cancer achieve and maintain a healthy body weight through regular activity and healthy eating:

Use "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide. "Canada's Food Guide" will help you plan a balanced diet with a variety of foods to meet your nutritional needs and to maintain a healthy weight.

Eat more plant foods.

- Fill your plate with at least 2/3 plant foods. Make vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes (lentils, dried beans and peas) the focus of your meal. Think of meat as a garnish rather than the centerpiece.
- Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits every day. Choose three different colours of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Eat whole grain foods and/or legumes with every meal. Whole grain foods include: whole wheat or dark rye bread, brown or wild rice, oatmeal, whole wheat pasta, barley and whole grain crackers.

- Have vegetarian meals often. Try recipes that include legumes — lentils and dried beans and peas.

Follow a lower fat diet.

- Choose lower fat foods.
- Add less fat to foods and choose healthier fats when adding fat to foods.
- Use low fat cooking methods.
- Limit high fat convenience foods.

Limit sugary foods and beverages with added sugar.

- Limit soft drinks, juice flavoured drinks like fruit punches, iced teas, sports and energy drinks, milkshakes, and sweetened fruit juice.
- Save sugary foods like chocolate, cakes, cookies and pastries for special occasions and have a small portion.

Eat less red meat and avoid processed meats. Have red meat (beef, pork, lamb) less often and have smaller portions. Avoid processed meats such as sausages, bacon and hotdogs or save for special occasions.

Limit alcohol.

- If you drink alcohol, limit to: 2 drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.
- One drink, for example, is equivalent to one of the following choices:
 - 360 mL (12 oz) bottle of beer
 - 150 mL (5 oz) of table wine
 - 45 mL (1½ oz) of liquor (e.g., vodka, whisky, rum or gin)

Reduce your salt intake.

- Enjoy your food without adding salt.
- Limit salty foods and foods preserved with salt. These include: packaged snack foods, canned vegetables, soups and stews and deli meats.
- For more tips on how to reduce your salt intake see "Low Sodium Eating" and other low sodium fact sheets.

Use dietary supplements cautiously. Supplements do not provide the same cancer protection benefits as eating whole foods and are not recommended for cancer prevention, but may be required at different life stages, if you have certain medical conditions, or if your food choices are limited. For more information see "Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Dietary Supplements".

Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

- To find out what a healthy weight is for you, look at the "Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults" web site at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/weights-poids/index-eng.php.
- If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly — no more than 0.5-1 kilograms or 1-2 pounds each week. For tips on lifestyle changes you can take to achieve healthy weight loss and maintenance, see "Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss: Getting Started" and "Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss: Taking Action" fact sheets.

Be physically active everyday.

- Start with 30 minutes of physical activity everyday. As your fitness level improves aim for 60 minutes or more of moderate activity (for example, walking briskly, cycling, dancing, swimming) or 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity (for example, running, tennis) every day. Limit sedentary activities such as watching television and sitting at the computer.
- Check with your doctor before starting any exercise plan, especially if you have not been active before.



Additional Resources

- HealthLinkBC File #68k Vitamin and Mineral Supplements for Adults www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/hfile68k.stm
- Dietitian Services Fact Sheets available by mail (call 8-1-1) or at www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian:
 - Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Plant-based Diet
 - Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Meat, Nitrates and Barbequing
 - Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Dietary Supplements
 - Low Sodium Eating and other low sodium fact sheets
 - Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss: Getting Started and Taking Action
- "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide
- Canadian Cancer Society www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/frontdoor/0,,3278___langId-en,00.html
- American Institute of Cancer Research www.aicr.org/site/PageServer

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Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian or call 8-1-1 (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.