

# Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

## Breast Cancer

Eating well by following the suggestions in the factsheet "Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Diet and Cancer Prevention Basics" is one of the main things you can do to lower your risk of cancer. Specific diet and lifestyle choices that protect against breast cancer include getting regular exercise, staying at a healthy weight, not drinking alcohol and breastfeeding.

You may also be concerned about your risk for other conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Many of the healthy eating habits that lower your risk of cancer are also good for your health in general. You should eat a diet that keeps you at a healthy weight and includes a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and dried lentils and beans.



### Steps you can take

Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. To determine if you are at a healthy body weight, visit the "Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults" web site at [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/healthy-weights/canadian-guidelines-body-weight-classificationadults.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/healthy-weights/canadian-guidelines-body-weight-classificationadults.html).

Follow the suggestions from "Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Diet and Cancer Prevention Basics".

Stay at a healthy weight. Being overweight increases a woman's risk of developing breast cancer after menopause.

To find out if you are at a healthy body weight, visit the "Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults" website at [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/healthy-weights.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/healthy-weights.html).

Be Active everyday. Exercise helps protect against breast cancer and weight gain.

Start with 30 minutes of physical activity everyday. As your fitness level improves, aim for 60 minutes or more of moderate activity (e.g., walking

briskly, cycling, dancing, swimming) or 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity (e.g., running, tennis) every day. Limit sedentary activities such as watching television and sitting at the computer.

Avoid alcohol. Drinking any amount of any kind of alcohol increases your risk of breast cancer. If you choose to drink, limit to no more than one drink per day.

One drink is: 350 mL (12 oz) bottle of beer or 150 mL (5 oz) of table wine or 45 mL (1.5 oz) of liquor (e.g., vodka, whisky, rum or gin).

Eat a variety of foods. Researchers are studying whether specific foods or nutrients such as vegetables, fruits, soy, flax, fat and fibre can affect breast cancer risk. A firm link between these foods and risk of breast cancer hasn't been found.

- Include foods such as soy and ground flaxseeds or other healthy foods as part of a varied diet. Variety helps you get the nutrients you need and lessens the chance of having unhealthy effects from eating too much of any one food.
- A low fat diet may lower the risk of breast cancer and is recommended for overall health. Following a low fat diet may help you lose weight and stay at a healthy body weight, which can help decrease risk of breast cancer.

Choose food as your main source of vitamins, minerals and other cancer fighting compounds, rather than taking a supplement for cancer prevention. Vitamins and minerals are being studied to see if they lower risk of breast cancer. So far researchers haven't found a firm link between any vitamins or minerals and risk of breast cancer.

- To learn about the recommended daily intake for vitamins and minerals and the safe upper limits view the "Dietary Reference Intake Tables for vitamins and minerals" available from Health Canada at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/reference/table/indexeng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/reference/table/indexeng.php) [Dietary Reference Intakes Tables [Health Canada, 2005]].
- Speak with your doctor or a registered dietitian about whether a vitamin or mineral supplement could help you.

## **Additional Resources**

Dietitian Services Fact Sheets available by mail (call 8-1-1) or at [www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian) [Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC]:

- Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention Series: Diet and Cancer Prevention Basics; Plant-based Diet; Meat, Nitrates and Barbequing; Dietary Supplements
- Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss (package)

Canadian Cancer Society [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

American Institute for Cancer Research [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org)