

Nutrition and Cancer Prevention

A healthy, balanced eating plan gives you energy and helps your body fight disease including some types of cancer. With so many healthy eating plans available today, you might wonder which offer the most cancer-fighting nutrients.

A growing body of research proves that fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. In fact, fruits and vegetables should be the foundation of a healthy diet. Most people need to double the amount of fruits and vegetables they eat every day.

According to the National Cancer Institute's "Eat 5-to-9 a day" program guidelines, people whose diets are rich in fruits and vegetables (5 to 9 servings a day) have a lower risk of getting cancers of the lung, mouth, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, colon, and rectum. They are also less likely to get cancers of the breast, pancreas, ovaries, larynx, and bladder. There is no specific fruit or vegetable responsible for reducing cancer risk; instead, research shows that it is the regular consumption of a variety of fruits and vegetables that reduces risk.

An expert report, *Food, Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective*, reviewed over 4,500 world-wide research studies and found that if people increased their fruit and vegetable consumption to at least five servings a day, cancer rates could be reduced by more than 20 percent.

Be sure to choose a variety of colors when eating fruits and vegetables – green, yellow-orange, red, blue-purple and white. Each color offers something unique, like different vitamins, minerals, and disease-fighting phytochemicals, that work together to protect your health. Only fruits and vegetables, not pills or supplements, can give you these nutrients in the healthy combinations nature intended.

And although fruits and vegetables provide a lot of healthful nutrients, they do not provide them all. Balance your diet with foods from the other food groups. Whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean proteins, and certain fats all contribute important nutrients to a healthy diet.

Remember: The basic guides for healthy eating are pretty simple:

- Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables
- Add more whole grains like whole wheat bread, oatmeal and brown rice
- Choose leaner meats like chicken, fish and less fatty cuts of beef in sensible portions
- Grill, steam, roast or broil foods instead of frying or sautéing
- Limit foods high in saturated fats and cholesterol
- Cut back on the sweets and pass on the salt
- Limit the number of alcoholic beverages each day, or don't drink at all. The National Cancer Institute recommends no more than one alcoholic beverage for women and two for men each day.
- Stay physically active for at least 30 minutes most or all days of the week



For more information on nutritious eating and disease prevention, visit anthem.com. Also visit the following sites:

National Cancer Institute - www.cancer.gov or www.5aday.gov

American Dietetic Association – www.eatright.org/Public/NutritionInformation/index_17390.cfm

National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health – www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/nutrition.html

American Cancer Society – www.cancer.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.cdc.gov

National Institutes of Health – www.nih.gov

United States Department of Agriculture – www.mypyramid.gov

Source: www.5aday.gov (National Cancer Institute)

This information is intended for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your physician for advice about changes that may affect your health.