

Cancer Risk Reduction Through Nutrition

Following the five steps below may reduce your risk of a cancer diagnosis or a cancer recurrence. These guidelines come from a comprehensive, evidence-based literature review led by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR). If you have questions about your nutrition needs, ask your health care provider to schedule an appointment with the dietitian.

1. Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans.
 - Fill at least 2/3 of your plate with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and/or seeds.
 - Eat at least 2 ½ cups of non-starchy vegetables and fruits a day. Aim for more vegetables than fruits.
 - Aim for eating a variety of colorful vegetables and fruits.

2. Eat less red meat (such as beef, pork and lamb) and avoid eating processed meats.
 - Limit animal foods to no more than 1/3 of your plate.
 - Eat no more than 18 ounces of red meat per week. Keep in mind that 3 ounces (1 serving) of red meat is about the size of a deck of cards.
 - Avoid processed meats as much as possible. This includes sandwich meats, ham, bacon, pastrami, salami, hot dogs and sausages.
 - Processed meats are preserved by smoking, curing or salting or have added chemical preservatives. Cancer-causing substances (carcinogens) can form when meats are preserved.

3. Eat less salty foods and foods processed with salt (sodium).
 - Limit your daily intake of salt to less than 2,400 milligrams (1 teaspoon).
 - Foods that do not taste “salty” such as processed foods, soups, pizza, breakfast cereals, breads, frozen meals, canned foods, sweets and desserts can contain sodium.
 - Check the nutrition label for sodium content information. For more information, see the handout “Food Labels.”

4. Avoid drinking sugary drinks and limit your daily intake of high calorie, low nutrient foods.
 - Sugary drinks include soft drinks, energy drinks, juice flavored drinks, sports drinks, fruit juice and coffee or tea with added sugar.
 - High calorie foods (candy, cakes, pies, cookies, ice cream, chips and fast foods) have added sugar and fat to improve their taste.
 - In excess, high-calorie foods and sugary drinks can lead to weight gain and increase your cancer risk.

5. Drink less Alcohol
 - AICR currently recommends not drinking alcohol.

Patient Education



- If consumed, limit alcohol to no more than two drinks per day for men and no more than one drink per day for women (one drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1 ½ ounces of liquor).

Resources

MD Anderson At the Table Cookbook – www.mdanderson.org/recipes

Fruits & Veggies-More Matters – www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

AICR – www.aicr.org

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics – <http://www.eatright.org/Public/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention –
www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/fruits_vegetables.html

Nutrition.gov – www.nutrition.gov

United States Department of Agriculture’s Nutrient Data Laboratory – <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/>

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