

Preventing Cancer: Nutrition Is Your Best Weapon

Cancer. The word can scare most of the population, with images of hair loss and chemotherapy flashing through our minds. And this insidious disease has made big news recently as one of the main causes of death in the United States, killing over half a million Americans annually.

But, there is something reassuring that you need to know: There are behavior and lifestyle changes that, when done on a consistent basis, can help protect you from this disease.

In a recent research study by the CDC, scientists discovered (or re-discovered, rather) that up to 80% of chronic illnesses, including cancer, can be prevented by keeping weight down to a body mass index below 30 and eating an all-natural, healthy diet, with lots of fruits and vegetables. Other important health factors that contribute to the decrease of cancer risk include exercising and not smoking. With this study, now more than ever before we can acknowledge that there is an opportunity for prevention and reduction of cancer risk through dietary measures.

Which exact factors contribute to the reduced risk of cancer?

- **Healthy weight:** A body mass index up to 24.9 is considered normal. Higher than 25 is overweight. Although the internet is full of quick BMI calculators, the most precise way of measuring can be achieved at your doctor's office or at a fitness facility. *If you want to calculate your body mass index, here is the formula: Your weight in pounds x 703, then divide by height in inches squared. For example: if you weigh 150lbs, $150 \times 703 = 105,450$; then divide by height in inches square. If you are 5'4", that's 64". $64 \text{ squared is } 4,096$. $105,450/4,096 = 25.7$ Your BMI is 25.7.*
- **Portion control:** It's no secret that food portion sizes are often out of control in our country. An average restaurant meal can easily feed two people. When dining out, the simplest way to control portions (and thus weight gain) is to immediately ask for a to-go box and put half of your food away, while enjoying the other half.
- **Fruits and veggies:** Incorporate a minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables into your daily diet.
- **Regular exercise:** Yes, you've heard it before, but here it is again. Studies repeatedly show that regular exercise (at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise, three times per week) helps decrease risk of chronic disease.
- **More grains, less processed foods:** Whole grains (that includes cereal and bread) are good for you. Processed foods are not (that means anything that comes in a packaging or a box of some sort). Throw out those Twinkies!

- **Lean meats:** Natural, lean meats with no preservatives or chemicals are the best option for your family.
- **Limited alcohol:** Excessive alcohol consumption is just not a good idea.

Granted, while reading this list you may be thinking, “Sure, that’s easy to say. But when I’m in a rush to get my kids to soccer practice, a drive-thru cheeseburger is the easiest thing!” You’re right. Convenience has replaced health values in our busy, on-the-run culture. We’re constantly bombarded with advertisements of inexpensive non-healthy food options, such as fast food, unhealthy snacks, heavily sugared drinks, and so on. Going out for dinner also presents a problem with above-mentioned portion sizes. Furthermore, there is a prominent belief that natural, healthy and/or organic foods are very expensive, and thus impossible to afford for an average family.

While some of these factors are true, it is important to keep in mind that healthy eating — and healthy living — is a matter of choice and planning. Planning your meals and snacks, cooking in advance, setting up your budget in a way that helps you afford the natural food alternatives — all of this will allow your family to eat better. Eating healthy should not be a “maybe;” rather it should be a “must” on your list of family and monetary priorities.

It is important, at this point, to address the notion of fad diets. You have, no doubt, heard of the popular “diets du jour,” such as Atkins Diet, South Beach Diet, and others. While some of these ways of eating have certain merits, most people are not capable of sustaining these eating methods for prolonged periods of time. As soon as you go back to your old ways of eating, all the potential weight you may have lost comes back. When thinking of altering eating habits, it’s important to consider not a diet, but a life change. A diet implies temporary changes. A change in life habits means a permanent alteration in the way you consume food.

When you research healthier eating options, keep in mind something scientists are calling “Living Off the Ocean.” Epidemiologists have discovered that those nations who consume more seafood live the longest lives. So, consider adding seafood to your regular diet on a permanent basis.

More than 1,500 people die of cancer every day. Yes, every day! Thinking about these statistics makes it only normal to want to add preventative measures to your daily life. The American Institute for Cancer Research estimates that 30-50% of cancers are preventable by a healthier diet. Let’s look at specific nutrients linked to a reduced risk of cancer:

- **Lycopene:** Found in tomatoes, tomato products, and grapefruits, among others.
- **Ground flax seeds**

- **Chlorophyll:** Found in spinach, green olives, brussel sprouts, collard greens, cucumbers, etc.
- **Vitamin B-12:** Found in fish, poultry, eggs and milk.
- **Folic Acid:** Found in dark leafy vegetables.
- **Vitamin D:** Found in sunlight and supplements
- **Vitamin C:** Found in broccoli, bell peppers, lemons, oranges, strawberries and others.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Salmon, walnuts, flax seeds.
- **Selenium:** Found in whole grains, legumes, nuts.

Much research goes into examining why exactly natural foods help protect us from cancer. The agreement seems to be on the fact that diets with lean, chemical-free protein, fish and lots of fruits and vegetables are nutrient-dense. Full of anti-oxidants, these foods help combat harmful free radical particles in our bodies.

Of all the ways we have to help prevent cancer and live a longer life, eating a healthy, balanced, natural diet is by far the easiest and most important. Eating is what we do every day. We buy food, we plan meals, we cook, and we sit with our families to dine together. In our culture, eating is integral to our life.

Eating right means consuming more naturally-prepared, hormone-free foods, increasing healthy fat intake, and decreasing the consumption of salt and sugar. Cancer is a serious issue in our society today. However, with knowledge and proper nutrition, we can decrease the cancer statistics and build a healthier future for our families.

Health experts directly relate the prevention of cancer to one's lifestyle. Regular exercise and a healthy diet, rich in antioxidants and free from chemicals, can help prevent cancer. Supplements are also highly recommended for those who have a strong family history of cancer, or wish to be proactive in preventing it. Below is a list of supplements recommended for cancer prevention. Make sure they are manufactured by a company with NPA's certification for good manufacturing practices. Additional supplements may be recommended by your doctor.

Krill or Fish oil - essential source of omega 3 fatty acids, for heart health and decrease inflammation.

Gender Specific Multivitamin - to ensure all vitamin and mineral requirements are met daily.

Ubiquinol or CoQ10 - pure form of antioxidants, boost immune system and manage chronic disease

Probiotics - digestive and immune health

Super Greens and/or Resveratrol - pure form of antioxidants