

WHY

Why is diet important for cancer prevention?

Although cancer survival rates are increasing, the number of Canadians diagnosed with cancer is also increasing. On the bright side, research suggests that approximately half of all new cancer cases and cancer deaths worldwide are preventable. In developed countries such as Canada, the greatest risk factors are tobacco smoking (30%) and poor diet, obesity, and low levels of physical activity combined (30%). It's important to be informed on all the steps you can take to prevent cancer. A healthy lifestyle and, specifically, making changes to your diet, can reduce your risk of getting certain types of cancer.



HOW

How can I eat better to reduce my risk of cancer?

There are a number of things you should change in your diet and lifestyle in order to reduce your risk of cancer. Remember, small changes go a long way to improving your overall health and well-being. Choose the areas of your diet, activity levels, and lifestyle that you want to focus on first. Then make a plan and stick with it.

Reach and keep a healthy body weight.

Keeping a healthy body weight throughout life is one of the most important things you can do to prevent cancer. A Body Mass Index (BMI) of 18.5-24.9 places you at the lowest risk for developing many types of cancer. Evidence shows that increased body fat raises the risk of esophageal, pancreatic, colorectal, postmenopausal breast, endometrial, and kidney cancer. Having a waist circumference of ≥ 102 cm (40") in men and ≥ 88 cm (35") in women has also been linked to a higher risk of cancer.

In fact, abdominal fat specifically increases the risk of colorectal cancer.

Cut down on eating calorie dense foods, such as sugary drinks (e.g., soft drinks) and high-fat food (e.g., fried foods like chips and french fries). Eating healthy and being active everyday can help you reach and keep a healthy body weight.

WHAT

What parts of my diet can I change to lower my cancer risk?

Making wise choices when it comes to what you eat and drink can reduce your risk for cancer. In 2007, a global report titled *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective*, was produced by a group of experts from around the world. The table to the right shows the link between diet and the risk for certain types of cancer.

Food Group/ Other	Risk Effect	Cancer Types	Evidence Strength
Obesity (linked to eating energy-dense foods high in sugar and fat)	Increase	Esophagus Breast Pancreas Kidney Endometrial Colorectal	Convincing
Red Meat and Processed Meat	Increase	Colorectal	Convincing
Fibre	Decrease	Colorectal	Probable
Vegetables and Fruit	Decrease	Digestive Tract Prostate Lung	Probable
Alcohol	Increase	Mouth Pharynx Larynx Esophagus Breast Colorectal	Convincing

World Cancer Research Fund & American Institute of Cancer Research. (2007). Summary: *Food, nutrition, physical activity, and the prevention of cancer: A global perspective*. Retrieved on June 2, 2009 from <http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/>



Limit your intake of red meat and certain higher-fat, processed meats.

Research shows clearly that eating red meat and processed meat increases the risk of colorectal cancer, the second-leading cause of cancer death in Canada. If you eat red meat regularly, try to limit it to less than 500 g (18 oz) per week. Also, really limit your intake of processed red meat, including ham, bacon, pastrami, salami, sausages, frankfurters, and hot dogs. They can be higher in calories, contain high levels of sodium, and may contain chemical preservatives such as nitrites/nitrates that are linked with cancer. There is probable evidence that salt, salty foods, and salt-preserved foods increase the risk of stomach cancer.

Eat more vegetables, fruit, and whole grain products.

You can cut down on your intake of calorie dense foods by replacing them with foods lower in calories and higher in nutrients. Focus on high fibre and non-starchy vegetables, fruit, legumes, and whole grain products. Try to eat at least five servings of non-starchy vegetables and fruit each day. Eating non-starchy vegetables, such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and brussels sprouts is linked to a reduced risk of cancer of the stomach, esophagus, mouth, pharynx, and larynx.

Limit the amount of alcohol that you drink.

There is growing evidence that all types of alcoholic drinks are linked to a number of cancers, including mouth, esophagus, larynx, colorectal, pre- and post-menopausal breast, and liver. The Canadian Cancer Society reports that drinking more than 3.5 drinks a day can double or even triple your risk of developing most of these types of cancer. Just over one drink a day on average almost doubles the risk of breast cancer. Limit yourself to no more than one standard drink per day for women or no more than two drinks per day for men. Occasional heavy drinking is even more likely to lead to poor health outcomes.

What is one standard drink?

- 5 oz/142 mL of wine (12% alcohol)
- 1.5 oz/43 mL of spirits (40% alcohol)
- 12 oz/341 mL of regular strength beer (5% alcohol)

Remember to be physically active.

Limit time where you are inactive, such as watching t.v. or using computers and aim to get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity (e.g., brisk walking) every day. Try increasing your daily physical activity up to 60 minutes of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity (e.g., running or swimming) daily. Regular physical activity decreases the risk of colon cancer. It also helps you reach and keep a healthy weight, which is associated with many types of cancer already listed. Remember that physical activity doesn't have to mean playing a sport or going to the gym. It can be as simple as going for a bike ride, doing household chores, gardening, or walking the dog.

Make It Happen at your Workplace!

Here are some suggestions to help you practice a healthier lifestyle at work.

Get a group of your coworkers together and participate in an active community fundraiser for cancer research (e.g., a walk or run). You will be getting active and socializing while supporting research.

Keep a supply of ready-to-eat vegetables and fruit available at your desk for healthy snacks.

Encourage physical activity at work. Walk on break times, climb stairs, and bike to work if possible.

Request that your vending machines are stocked with healthier items that are lower in fat, refined sugar, and sodium (e.g., high fibre bars, unsalted trail mix, etc.).

Encourage all your coworkers to get screened. Invite in agencies to promote or provide screening for all types of cancer.

If you have green space at work, why not start a workplace community vegetable garden?



MYTH OR FACT:

Drinking red wine can help prevent cancer.

Red wine contains phytochemicals called polyphenols (i.e., catechins and resveratrol). Evidence from animal studies shows that resveratrol may be effective in cancer prevention.

However, drinking alcohol may increase the risk of certain cancers and the evidence that shows the health benefits of red wine in cancer prevention are linked to its non-alcoholic components found in fruit such as grapes.

(National Cancer Institute, 2009).

Answers from front page
F•T•F•T•T•F•T



Key References:

- Canadian Cancer Society. (2009). *Cancer statistics*. Retrieved June 1, 2009 from http://www.cancer.ca/canada-wide/about%20cancer/cancer%20statistics/powerpoint%20slides.aspx?sc_lang=en
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2008). *Low-risk drinking guidelines*. Retrieved June 23, 2009 from http://www.camh.net/About_Addiction_Mental_Health/Drug_and_Addiction_Information/low_risk_drinking_guidelines.html
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SMART STEPS TO LIVE LONGER

Personal Health Guide

Fall 2009

FOCUS ON CANCER

Cancer is a chronic disease that most of us will be impacted by at some point in our lives. It may be a friend or family member fighting the disease or it could be you. In fact, the most current incidence rates show that 40% of Canadian women and 45% of men will develop cancer during their lifetimes. Indeed, one out of every four Canadians will die from cancer (Canadian Cancer Society, 2009).

In addition to inactive lifestyles and obesity, diet-related factors are thought to account for about 30% of cancers in developed countries. The link between diet and cancer began to gain more attention in the 1970's when it was noted that many people in western countries, such as Canada, consumed diets high in animal products, fat, and sugar. People in western countries also had high rates of certain types of cancer (i.e., colorectal, breast, prostate, endometrial, and lung). In contrast, people in developing countries that consumed diets that were low in animal products, fat, and sugar, had low rates of these types of cancer.

The short-term benefits of eating a healthy diet high in vegetables, fruit, and fibre are well known and include weight control, increased energy levels, and regularity. As more research is completed, the long-term benefits of healthy eating, such as cancer prevention, have become more evident. In fact, there are now scientifically grounded dietary recommendations that we can follow that are likely to reduce our risk of cancer.

Websites

Canadian Cancer Society
Learn more about general healthy eating to prevent cancer.
http://www.cancer.ca/canada-wide/prevention/eat%20well.aspx?sc_lang=en

Heart and Stroke Foundation
Here you can analyze your weight and waist circumference accurately and find information on the importance of keeping your waistline at a healthy size.
<http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.iklQLcMWWJtE/b.3876195/>

5 to 10 a Day
Learn ways to increase your intake of vegetables and fruit.
<http://www.5to10aday.com/>

Gmaps Pedometer
Set monthly goals and track your progress.
<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/trr/tools/trackerlogin.html>

Sodium101.ca
Get some tips and tricks on how you can reduce your sodium intake.
<http://www.sodium101.ca>



TRUE OR FALSE

- One out of every ten Canadians will die from cancer. TRUE FALSE
- Reaching and keeping a healthy body weight throughout life can help prevent cancer. TRUE FALSE
- You should eat *no more* than five servings of non-starchy vegetables and fruit every day to prevent cancer. TRUE FALSE
- Men should consume *no more* than two alcoholic drinks per day. TRUE FALSE
- Research suggests that salt increases the risk of stomach cancer. TRUE FALSE
- There is convincing evidence that eating red meat and processed meat increases the risk of colorectal cancer. TRUE FALSE
- Everyone should aim for 2 hours of moderate physical activity each day. TRUE FALSE
- Non-starchy vegetables include cabbage, broccoli, and kale. TRUE FALSE

Answers located on back page.

