

Eating Guidelines For Cancer Survivors

After treatment ends and you are feeling well you may wonder what to eat to lower the risk of cancer coming back and to help you feel your best. Your overall diet and lifestyle are likely to have more impact than any one food that you eat or do not eat. Healthy eating with regular exercise can help you achieve and stay at a healthy weight, which may be one of the most important ways to protect against cancer.

People are also concerned about their risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and osteoporosis. Many of the same healthy eating and lifestyle habits recommended for when you are feeling well and have finished cancer treatment are also encouraged to lower the risk for many of these health conditions.

There are many recommendations for reducing cancer risk. Start with one change and add more when you are ready. Even small changes in your diet and activity level can help lower cancer risk.

If you are having problems eating or have had unplanned weight loss this information may not be appropriate for you. Speak with a Registered Dietitian about your nutritional needs.



Steps you can take

To lower the risk of cancer, achieve and maintain a healthy body weight through regular activity and healthy eating.

Use "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide". "Canada's Food Guide" will help you plan a balanced diet with a variety of foods to meet your nutritional needs and to maintain a healthy weight. To get a copy of "Canada's Food Guide" visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide or call 1-800-OCanada (1-800-622-6232).

Eat more plant foods.

- | Fill your plate with at least 2/3 plant foods. Make vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes (lentils, dried beans and peas) the focus of your meal. Think of meat as a garnish rather than the centrepiece.
- | Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits every day. Try different coloured fruits and vegetables. Include vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, kale, cabbage and brussels sprouts often.
- | Eat whole grain foods and/or legumes with every meal. Whole grain foods include: whole wheat or dark rye bread, brown or wild rice, oatmeal, whole wheat pasta, barley and whole grain crackers.
- | Have vegetarian meals often. Try recipes that include legumes — lentils and dried beans and peas.

Eat a lower fat diet.

- | Choose lower fat foods like skim and 1% dairy products.
- | Choose healthier fats, such as canola or olive oil. Limit all added fats, such as oils, salad dressings and margarine to 15-30 mL (3-6 tsp) per day.
- | Use low fat cooking methods. Bake, steam or braise foods instead of frying.
- | Limit high fat snack foods like chips, donuts, chocolate bars and other convenience foods like fast foods.

Limit sugary foods and beverages with added sugar.

- | Limit soft drinks, juice, flavoured drinks like fruit punches, iced tea, sports and energy drinks, milkshakes, and sweetened fruit juice.
- | Save sugary foods like chocolate, cakes, cookies and pastries for special occasions and have small portions.

Eat less red meat and avoid processed meats. Have red meat (beef, pork, lamb) less often and take smaller portions. Avoid processed meats such as sausages, bacon, ham and hotdogs, or save these just for special occasions. Eat at least 2 servings of fish each week instead of meat. One serving of fish is 75 g (2 ½ oz). Choose fish such as char, herring, mackerel, salmon and trout.

Limit alcohol. If you drink alcohol, limit to 2 drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. One drink is equal to one of the following choices: 350 mL (12 oz) bottle of beer or 150 mL (5 oz) of table wine or 45 mL (1 ½ oz) of liquor (e.g., vodka, whisky, rum or gin).

Limit salty foods and enjoy your food without adding salt. For more tips on how to reduce your salt intake see "Low Sodium Eating" and other low sodium fact sheets.

Be careful with supplements. Many vitamin, mineral, herbal, and other supplements should be avoided during cancer treatment. They are also not recommended for cancer prevention, as they do not give the same cancer protection benefits as eating whole foods. If you can't eat a well-balanced diet you may want to take a one-a-day multiple vitamin and mineral supplement. For more information about dietary supplements see "Guidelines for After a Cancer Diagnosis: Dietary Supplements" and speak with your doctor or a Dietitian.

Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. If you are overweight, it is more likely that your cancer may come back or that you may develop new cancers or other chronic diseases.

- | To find out what a healthy weight is for you, look at the "Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults" website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/weights-poids/guide-ld-adult/index-eng.php.
- | If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly — no more than 0.5 -1 kilogram or 1-2 pounds each week. For tips on lifestyle changes you can take to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, see the "Lifestyle Steps for a Healthier You" fact sheet.
- | It is not usually suggested to try to lose weight during cancer treatment. Ask your doctor if it would be safe for you to try to lose weight at this time.

Be physically active everyday.

- | 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.
- | Check with your doctor before starting any exercise plan, especially if you have not been active before.



Additional Resources

- | Canadian Cancer Society www.cancer.ca
- | American Institute of Cancer Research www.aicr.org

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.

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Dietitians at the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre

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