

## Cancer Prevention Diet

### *Overview*

A diet low in fat, alcohol, and salt but high in fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains may help prevent certain types of cancer. Staying physically active will also help. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States. Seven out of every ten cancer cases have been directly linked to diet and lifestyle factors.

### *What is the information for this topic?*

According to the National Cancer Institute (see <http://www.5aday.gov/>), studies show that many substances found in fruits, vegetables, and grains may slow or prevent cancer growth and development. Other experts have found that groups of people who eat large amounts of plant-based foods have less risk for certain types of cancers. The American Institute for Cancer Research suggests the following guidelines for cancer prevention:

- Choose a diet rich in a variety of plant-based foods. Vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains contain natural defenses. They help your body destroy substances that cause cancer before they do any damage. Include more rice and beans, salad, and steamed vegetables in your main meal of the day. Also, cut down on the amount of meat you eat.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits. Diets high in these foods may protect against cancers of the colon, stomach, rectum, esophagus, lung, and pharynx. The vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables play a role in cancer prevention. Substances called phytochemicals also help with this. Most experts believe that eating foods that contain these substances will help you prevent cancer better than taking supplements. Try to eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruits each day.
- Maintain a healthy weight and get regular exercise. Obesity may increase the risk for cancer of the uterus. Regular physical activity has been shown to protect against colon cancer.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation, if at all. Experts believe alcohol increases the risk of esophageal, liver, colon, and oral cancers. It also increases the risk of breast cancer in women. The risk is even greater for some of these cancers in drinkers who also smoke.
- Select foods low in fat and salt. High-fat diets may increase the risk for lung, colon, rectum, breast, uterus, and prostate cancers. A high-fat diet can also lead to obesity. Diets high in salt and salted foods may increase the risk for stomach cancer.
- Prepare and store food safely. Cooking meat, poultry, or fish at high temperatures over an open flame causes the formation of heterocyclic amines. When fat drips into the fire, the smoke and flames that rise up onto the food leave behind cancer-causing substances called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. A diet high in meat cooked by grilling,

barbecuing, broiling, or pan-frying may increase the risk of stomach, colon, and rectal cancers.

To limit the formation of these substances, cut visible fat off your meat before you cook it. Marinate your meat with an oil-free marinade. Precook meat before you grill it. And avoid flare-ups when barbecuing. When cooking meats, it's best to use lower-heat options such as baking, poaching, stewing, roasting, and microwaving. Making relatively minor changes in food selection and preparation may significantly reduce your risk of developing cancer.