

8 Ways to Prevent Cancer

While a small portion of cancers occur due to inherited damaged genes, environmental factors play the most important role – and these can be modified. The newly released publication *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective* makes eight recommendations for decreasing your cancer risk:



1. Be lean, but not underweight.

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and other serious health problems. Abdominal fat – a “spare tire” around your middle – increases your risk of colon and other cancers. Keep your waistline measurement below 33 inches for women and under 37 inches for men.

2. Be physically active every day. All forms of physical activity protect against some cancers, and also against weight gain. Be moderately physically active (e.g., walking briskly) for at least 30 minutes every day. As your fitness level improves, aim for 60 minutes or more of moderate activity, or for 30 minutes or more of vigorous, physical activity every day. Limit sedentary habits such as watching television.



3. Limit consumption of high-calorie foods and avoid sugary drinks.

High-calorie foods tend to be processed foods with sugar and fat added to improve the taste. On the other hand, most vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains are low-calorie



and naturally delicious. Consume “fast foods” sparingly, if at all. Replace sugary drinks with water and other low-sugar alternatives.

Non-starchy vegetables include:

- Asparagus
- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cabbage
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Green, leafy vegetables
- Okra
- Onions
- Rutabaga
- Spinach
- Tomatoes
- Turnips
- Zucchini

4. Eat mostly plant-based foods. A higher consumption of plant foods protects against various cancers. Eat at least five servings of a variety of fruits and non-starchy vegetables every day. Limit starchy foods, like potatoes.

Foods containing fiber are also linked to a reduced risk of cancer and obesity. Eat whole grains and/or legumes with every meal, such as oats, brown rice, and whole-grain bread and pasta, along with fruits and vegetables.



The American Institute for Cancer Research has summarized the Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective report: www.aicr.org/site/PageServer?pagename=dc_home_guides.



5. Limit how much red meat and processed meat you eat.

People who eat primarily vegetarian diets have a lower risk of certain diseases, including some of the most common cancers. Meat can be a valuable

source of nutrients, in particular protein, iron, zinc, and vitamin B12. But vegetarian diets can meet all of the recommendations for nutrients. The key is to consume a variety of foods and the right amount of foods to meet your calorie needs. If you eat red meat, consume less than 18 oz each week; and very little, if any of it, processed.



Mycotoxins are poisonous substances produced by certain molds found primarily in grain and nut crops, but can also be found in celery, grape juice, apples, and other produce. Aflatoxin is a cancer-causing mycotoxin produced by certain fungi in or on foods and grains, especially field corn and peanuts. Other molds cause allergic reactions and respiratory problems. Don't buy or eat moldy food.

Read U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommendations on what to do with moldy food: www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Molds_on_Food/#16

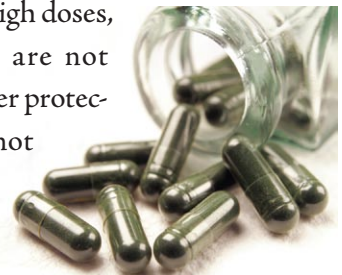
6. Limit alcoholic drinks.

Based solely on the research concerning cancer, even small amounts of alcoholic drinks should be avoided. The evidence shows that all alcoholic drinks have the same effect. This recommendation includes beer, wine, spirits (liquors) – all alcoholic drinks. If you choose to drink, limit yourself to no more than two drinks a day (if a man) or one drink a day (if a woman).



8. Try to meet your nutritional needs through diet alone.

The best source of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients is food, not dietary supplements. Because some supplements might increase cancer risk if taken in high doses, dietary supplements are not recommended for cancer protection. Overall diet – not supplements – is the key to lowering cancer risk.



7. Limit consumption of salt and avoid moldy grains or legumes.

Some salt is necessary for human health and life. However, eating excess amounts of salt and salt-preserved foods has been shown to be a likely cause of stomach cancer. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods with added salt.



These recommendations were derived from a thorough, five-year review of thousands of studies by the world's leading scientists. By following them, you can significantly reduce your risk of getting cancer.

World Cancer Research Fund and American Institute for Cancer Research. Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective. 2007.

