

Nutrition to Lower Disease Risk

In 2010, cancer will claim an estimated 569,490 lives, but according to the American Cancer Society, a third of those deaths could have been prevented through weight maintenance, healthy nutrition, and physical activity. Adopting a healthy lifestyle that includes a well-balanced diet full of nutrients that lower the risk of disease is important for overall well-being and critical to both preventing and fighting cancer. Eating certain types of foods, such as fruits and vegetables, can actually bolster cancer defenses and reduce risk. Fortunately, eating to prevent cancer can also help maintain a healthy weight, as studies have shown that obesity can increase cancer risk.

The following nutritional guidelines are recommended:

- Select a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and legumes, such as:
 - Dark, leafy greens and a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables, including berries.
 - Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage.
- Reduce intake of foods high in salt and fat.
- Reduce consumption of red meat and avoid processed meats.
- Limit sugary drinks and energy-dense foods.
- Opt for whole grains instead of processed or refined grains.
- Limit alcohol consumption. Women should have no more than one drink per day; men no more than two drinks per day.

Nutrition for Patients Fighting Cancer

Ensuring proper nutrition during cancer treatment is critical to recovery. Some patients find maintaining good nutrition a challenge due to the side effects of some treatment regimens, such as loss of appetite. Treatment can also affect how foods are tolerated and the body's absorption of nutrients. A healthy diet is an essential building block for allowing the body to repair itself and resist infection. Thus, planning for what one eats before, during, and after treatment is very important for maintaining strength. Proper nutrition for a patient undergoing treatment may be quite different than a normal diet, and it can vary depending on the patient's specific type of cancer and treatment.

The following are recommendations for patients undergoing cancer treatment:

- Eating plenty of proteins and calories helps the body repair tissue and maintain strength.
- "Good fats" like those found in vegetable oils and seafood can help the body protect tissue and carry vitamins through the bloodstream.
- Nutrient-rich carbohydrates, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, supply energy and promote organ health.
- Consuming plenty of water keeps the body hydrated, and is essential for proper cell function.
- Vitamin supplements may be needed, but it's important to consult with a physician before taking supplements or herbs.

Decisions on nutrition and supplements should be made in careful consultation with the treating physician, nurse, and/or a registered dietician.

Sources: American Cancer Society, American Institute for Cancer Research, and National Cancer Institute

