

How To Utilize Food In The Fight Against Cancer

Despite the fact that it claims millions of lives every year, cancer is often preventable. Estimates from the World Health

Organization indicate that between 30 and 50 percent of all cancer cases are preventable, and cancer prevention strategies are often

rooted in taking simple, daily steps to safeguard overall health.

The University of Kansas Cancer Center notes that no cancer is

100 percent preventable. So even individuals who do everything possible to reduce their risk for cancer may still develop the disease. However, making the right lifestyle choices can reduce cancer risk by a significant percentage.

Food is one potential weapon in the fight against cancer. The American Institute for Cancer Research reports that numerous studies have found that many individual minerals, vitamins and phytochemicals demonstrate anti-cancer effects. Those minerals, vitamins and phytochemicals can be found in a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans, including:

- Apples
- Asparagus
- Blueberries
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Cherries
- Coffee
- Cranberries
- Flaxseed
- Garlic

- Grapefruit
- Grapes
- Kale
- Oranges
- Pulses, such as dry beans, peas and lentils (legumes)
- Raspberries
- Soy
- Spinach
- Squash
- Strawberries
- Tea
- Tomatoes
- Walnuts
- Whole grains

It's worth noting that many of these foods also offer additional health benefits. For example, strawberries are a good source of potassium, which the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics notes has been proven to help lower blood pressure and potentially reduce risk of stroke.

It makes sense that if certain foods and beverages can help people reduce their risk for cancer, there's also others they should avoid. The AICR says it's best to limit consumption of certain foods and beverages. Though these items don't necessarily need

to be avoided entirely (unless a doctor advises doing so), moderation is essential with the following foods and beverages:

- Alcohol
- Processed meats, such as sausage, ham, bacon, hot dogs, and salami
- Red meat, which includes pork
- Sugary beverages, including sports drinks and sodas

The AICR notes that plant-based diets have become popular in recent years, but warns individuals that it's difficult to separate evidence from opinion in regard to these diets and their effects on cancer risk. Anyone considering a plant-based diet is urged to speak with their physician before making any changes.

A high percentage of cancer diagnoses are preventable. Certain foods and beverages can be great allies to individuals focused on reducing their cancer risk.



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Can Cancer Survivors Reduce Their Risk For Recurrence?

The World Health Organization reports that cancer is one of the leading causes of death across the globe. WHO estimates suggest nearly 10 million people lost their lives to cancer in 2020.

Such statistics are sobering, but individuals diagnosed with cancer should know that the five-year survival rates for various types of cancers have been trending upward for decades. For example, the American Cancer Society reports that the three-year survival rates for lung cancer, which the WHO notes is the second most common cause of cancer deaths across the globe, improved dramatically between 2004 and 2018. ACS data indicates that,

in 2004, 21 out of 100 people diagnosed with lung cancer were living three years after their diagnosis. By 2018, that figure had increased to 31 out of 100.

Can recurrence be prevented?

The ACS notes that nothing can prevent cancer from recurring. Some survivors will experience a recurrence of their cancer, while others won't. The reasons behind that remain a mystery, but a healthy lifestyle can strengthen the body and increase its readiness to combat cancer should it return.

Healthy habits

The ACS urges survivors to eat healthy in an effort to prevent recurrence. A nutritious diet has long been linked to helping individuals improve their overall health and reduce their cancer risk. For example, the organization Cancer Research UK notes that a nutritious diet helps people maintain a healthy weight, which is important for cancer survivors because obesity has been linked to 13 different types of cancer. The ACS recommends a diet that includes a variety of vegetables (i.e., dark green, red and orange veggies) and fiber-rich legumes like beans and peas. Avoid or limit consumption of red meat, which includes beef, lamb and pork. Processed meats

like hot dogs, sausage and deli meats should be avoided as well. When choosing grains, choose whole grains instead of white bread and traditional pastas.

Physical activity is another component of cancer prevention that might help reduce risk for recurrence. Though the link is not direct, the ACS reports that studies have shown that routine physical activity can reduce anxiety and depression, improve self-esteem, and reduce symptoms of fatigue, nausea, pain, and diarrhea.

The ACS notes that cancer survivors should be wary of dietary supplements that contain high levels of single nutrients. Some individuals who have survived cancer look to these supplements to reduce their risk for recurrence, but the ACS notes that they can have an unexpected, harmful effect on cancer survivors. Always consult your physician and/or cancer care team before taking any new supplements.

There's no guarantee that cancer survivors won't experience a recurrence at some point. But adopting a healthy lifestyle marked by a nutritious diet and routine physical activity can help survivors build the strength they need to combat a cancer recurrence.



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