

# Can food prevent cancer?

Studies have shown that eating healthy foods, especially plants, can help prevent certain health problems. It can help you avoid type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Some research also shows that a healthy diet can help prevent cancer.

There is no single food or diet that will always prevent cancer. Many times, cancer is caused by things we cannot control. But there is promising research that says a healthy diet can lower your risk of some cancers. Here is what researchers have found.



## FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

We already know fruits and vegetables are good for you. They are full of vitamins, fiber and other nutrients. Eating lots of fruits and vegetables may lower the chances of getting lung, colorectal, oral, esophagus, stomach and colon cancer. The Mediterranean Diet, which includes lots of fruits and vegetables, is one diet plan that seems to have anti-cancer ability.

In addition to fruits and vegetables, people should get enough calcium and vitamin D. These nutrients may play a role in lowering the risk of getting colorectal cancer.

## PHYTOCHEMICALS – A HEALTH BOOSTER

Phytochemicals are special chemicals found in plants. Some studies suggest that they can lower your cancer risk. Phytochemicals may:

- Boost your immune system
- Help block cancer-causing substances called carcinogens
- Lower inflammation that can lead to cancer
- Help your DNA repair itself
- Slow down the growth of cancer cells
- Get rid of damaged cells in the body

Phytochemicals are found in fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. Foods that have bright colors or strong flavors tend to have the most phytochemicals.

## WHAT NOT TO EAT

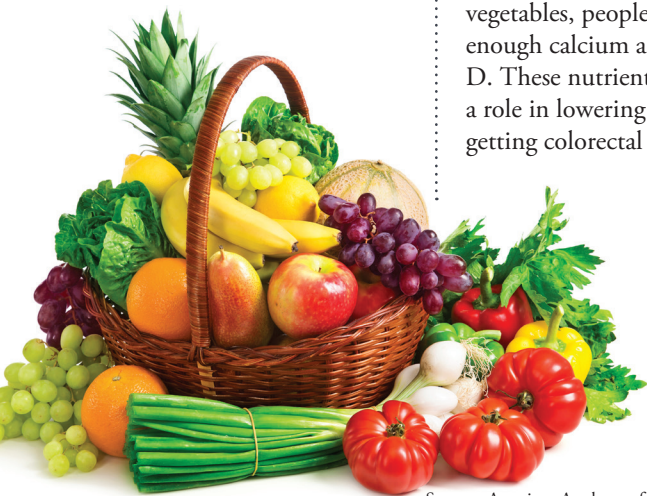
Some foods may increase the risk of some cancers. Avoid or limit:

- Heavily processed meats like ham, bacon, sausage and salami
- Alcohol, which may increase the risk of mouth, throat, esophagus, breast, colorectal and liver cancer
- Foods that cause indigestion and heartburn. Long-term heartburn can increase the risk of esophageal cancers

Most experts agree that nutritional supplements have not been shown to fight cancer. Stick to eating healthy foods for more cancer-fighting power.



Your doctor is your partner in helping to prevent cancer and other health problems. Be sure to discuss your cancer risk and the best diet for you.



Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians, American Institute for Cancer Research, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases