



For Your Health - 4 Healthy Eating Tips That Can Lower The Risk Of Cancer

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(SITEMAN CANCER CENTER) - It's likely no surprise to read that what we choose to eat and drink can have a large impact on our health, including our risk of cancer. Practically from the time we can sit up at the kitchen table, we're reminded of the importance of eating our vegetables. And although some of the messages and headlines we read these days about healthy eating can seem complicated or even contradictory, the science-backed basics of healthy eating actually remain simple.



Here are four tips that have been found to help lower the risk of cancer:

Focus on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains

Eating healthy, plant-based foods has a lot of overall health benefits and can also help prevent some cancers. Foods high in fiber and whole grains – like whole-wheat bread and whole-grain cereals – have been found to lower the risk of colon cancer. Diets rich in fruits and vegetables have been found to lower the risk of a collection of cancers that include cancers of the mouth, lungs, stomach, and colon. And there's growing evidence to suggest that eating higher amounts of vegetable protein in youth (from sources like soy, nuts, and vegetables) may improve breast health and lower the risk of adult breast cancer. Try to get at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day and at least three servings of whole grains. Also, work to keep foods like white bread, sugary cereals, and white rice to a minimum.

Limit food from animals

There's no need to go full vegetarian – unless you want to – but there's compelling evidence that eating fewer animal-based foods can lower the risk of colon cancer, prostate cancer, and possibly breast cancer. Try to eat fewer than three servings of red meat and processed meat each week, and choose more plant-based sources of protein and fat, like nuts, beans, and vegetables.

Limit alcohol. Zero is best?

When it comes to cancer, as well as overall health, the best choice is to not drink alcohol. While moderate drinking may have some heart-health benefits in older adults, even low levels of regular drinking can increase the risk of colon and breast cancer. Drinking in youth and young adulthood seems particularly risky for later adult breast cancer risk. And with the growing list of other risks associated with alcohol, not drinking is the healthiest choice. For adults who choose to drink, it's best to keep it to 1 drink a day or less.

Mind the calories

Though they're not always included in messages about healthy eating, calories are actually the single most important part of what we eat when it comes to cancer risk. Consistently eating too much can lead to weight gain. Among other health risks, obesity has been found to increase the risk of at least 13 different cancers. Yes, 13.

These tips can help us balance the number of calories we eat with the calories we burn:

- Fit some physical activity into each day.
- Limit fast food and avoid sugary drinks.
- Eat mostly healthy plant-based foods.
- Be a more mindful eater. Start with smaller portions, eat slowly and try to eat only when hungry.

Making changes to how we eat isn't always easy, but it's something we can all do. Start with something small, like cutting out one sugary soda a week or testing out a new vegetarian recipe, and then slowly build from there. Little changes can lead to big health benefits. Bit by bit. Bite by bite.

It's your health. Take control.

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