

Diet for Health After Cancer Treatment

Healthy lifestyles reduce risk of cancer recurrence, of new cancers, and of other chronic diseases.

Special diets or foods cannot cure cancer, but a balanced diet and exercise help to control weight which lowers disease risk.



The World Cancer Research Fund and American Cancer Society dietary guidelines for cancer prevention recommend:

- Maintain healthy weight with diet and exercise. If you are overweight now, any reduction in weight is beneficial.
- Consume at least 5, ideally 8, servings of fruits and vegetables daily. One serving is one medium sized fruit or half a bowl of cooked vegetables.
- Choose whole grain products like whole grain bread and brown rice, avoid refined products like white bread and white rice.
- Eat less animal protein. Limit red meat (including beef, lamb, pork) to 100g (a pack of cards) 2-3 times per week. Use mainly plant based protein (e.g. beans, peas, tofu, quinoa) and some poultry, fish or plant-based meat substitutes.
- Avoid all processed meats, particularly sausages, luncheon meats and hams.
- Avoid sugary products, like sodas, sweetened soymilk and lemon tea, candy and processed foods.
- Choose low sodium foods and limit added salt. If you are used to salty food, try gradually reducing the amount you add over several weeks to avoid blandness.
- Avoid alcohol. Moderate drinking does not protect against illness. If drinking, do so occasionally, 1-2 standard drinks, no more than 2-3 days each week.



Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are vital for a healthy diet. They provide...

- Vitamins and minerals to maintain body functions, e.g. immunity.
- Antioxidants, that may neutralize other cancer-causing chemicals in the diet.
- Fiber, slowing digestion to keep blood sugar level from rising rapidly, reducing cholesterol absorption and easing defecation.
- Feelings of fullness with fewer calories, helping with weight control.

Pay attention to both the quantity and quality of fruits and vegetables in your diet.

Quantity: Consume at least 5 servings daily

One serving of fruits and vegetables is...

- 1 rice bowl of uncooked vegetables (e.g. salad)
- ½ rice bowl of cooked vegetables
- About 5 broccoli florets
- 4-5 stems of choy sum/bok choy
- 1 medium sized tomato
- Usually, 1 serving is about 1/8 catty or 2 taels (a tennis ball sized amount)

Quality: Eat a mix of different colors

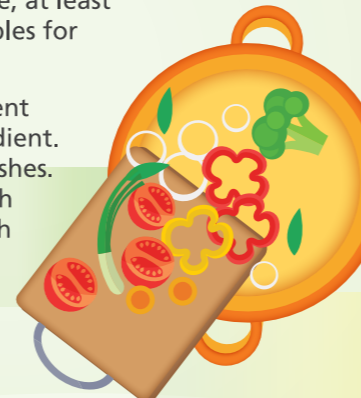
Fruits and vegetables of different colors contain different anti-oxidants, e.g.:

- Red - Lycopenes
- Orange and yellow - Carotenes
- Green - Chlorophyll
- Purple - Resveratrol
- White - Allicin



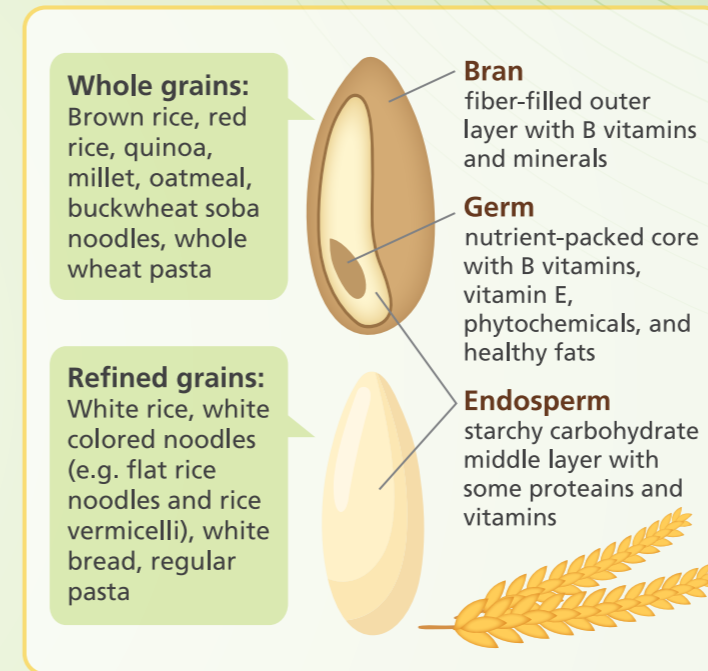
Some suggestions to help you eat more fruits and vegetables:

- Add fruits to breakfast, e.g. Add dried fruits to oatmeal or have fresh fruits with yogurt for breakfast. Eating two bananas is a healthier breakfast than a cake.
- Have a fruit for tea or dessert.
- Eat fruit as a snack instead of biscuits, crisps and cake.
- When you eat in a restaurant, replace a meat or carbohydrate dish with vegetables.
- When you cook at home, at least cook ¼ catty of vegetables for each family member.
- Use meat as a supplement rather than main ingredient. Eat mainly vegetable dishes. For example: Celery with cashew nuts, Onion with pork chop, Szechuan eggplant, French beans with minced pork, Celery with squid, Singaporean noodles, vegetable curry, etc.
- Each meal, include greens and at least one other colored vegetables, e.g. tomatoes, onions, eggplants, sweet potato, carrots, bell peppers.



Whole Grains

Most people eat grains as a staple food. Choose wholegrains over refined grains to help maintain health. Whole grains keep the vitamins, minerals, healthy fats and dietary fiber removed from refined grain.



You can eat more whole grains by:

- Gradually increasing whole grains (e.g. red rice, brown rice, quinoa, millet or oatmeal) in your white rice.
- Begin adding a handful of whole grains to refined grains. Slowly increase the proportion of whole grains ideally to 100% but not less than 50%.
- Have oatmeal or whole grain bread with fruits for breakfast.
- Choosing hot or cold soba noodles when having Japanese food.
- Drinking more water to facilitate digestion.

Protein

Protein is required for the repair of cells.

Plant protein

Soy products

- Tofu and tofu sheets
- Meat substitutes and gluten imitation meat



Other legumes

- Soybean sprouts, peas, red and black beans, chickpeas, mung beans, etc.



Nuts

- Peanuts, cashews, almonds, etc.



Vegetable sources

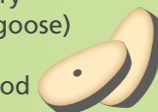
- Broccoli, spinach, sweetcorn, asparagus, mushrooms, quinoa, etc.



Animal protein

White meat

- Chicken and other poultry (especially goose)
- Fish and other seafood



Red meat

- Pork
- Beef
- Lamb
- Venison
- Veal
- Ham and sausages, etc.



In research studies, those consuming more red (especially beef and lamb) and processed meat (e.g. luncheon meat, ham, sausages and other preserved meat) had increased risk of cancers; and being overweight also independently increased risk for several other cancers. Therefore, eating primarily plant-based food can help prevent cancer and maintain health.

Food item	Protein (g/100g*)	Food item	Protein (g/100g*)
Chicken	32	Milk	3.5
Beef	31	Yogurt	4-6
Pork	32	Legumes	5-9
Fish	20-25	Nuts	14-20
Egg	13		

*100g is about the size of your palm or 2-3 mahjong

Adult men need 55-60g of protein daily while women need 45-50g per day. Therefore, obtaining sufficient protein from a normal diet is very easy. Because animal sources have the highest density of protein, you need to eat far fewer animal products to get sufficient daily protein. The caloric density is also higher for animal products than plant-based products. Animal products also come with a higher proportion of saturated fats, believed to be harmful to the heart. The more you can replace animal sources with other sources of protein, the more you can eat without having to worry about your weight!

Therefore, vary your protein sources each week, two thirds from plant and one third from animal sources. Eat animal protein no more than once per day. Use plant protein for the remainder.

For example:

- Legumes or vegetable protein for 2-4 meals each week
- Poultry, fish or other seafood for 1-2 meals each week
- Red meat for 1-2 meals each week (pork rather than beef or lamb where possible)
- Eggs for 1-2 meals each week

Consuming the right amount of protein from diverse sources can help maintain the balance of fat and calories, which is an integral part of a healthy diet.

Some suggested recipes can be found by scanning the QR code below.



A balanced diet is vital to maintain your health. If you need further help on diet-related issues, please call HKU Jockey Club Institute of Cancer Care Hotline on 3917 9606.