

## **Diet and Cancer - What You Need to Know**

### **What is cancer and how is it diet related?**

Cells in your body are always growing and multiplying to replace existing cells as they age. Cancer occurs when cell growth becomes uncontrollable and tumors develop. Antioxidants in food, such as Vitamins C, E and lycopene in tomatoes, may fight cancer. They act like fire extinguishers, putting out the "fires" or damage, caused by substances in the body. There are other steps involved in the growth of tumors. Different kinds of fat and soy may also play a role in tumor development.

### **Can changes in our diet help us reduce our chances of getting cancer?**

We could prevent about one-third (1/3) of cancers by changes in our diet. Family history (someone in our family that has had cancer) and environment such as the sun and pollution can also increase our chances of getting cancer.

**What specific changes in the diet may help us reduce our chances of getting cancer?** Below are some basic suggestions to focus on.

#### Choose a diet based on a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Doing this may lower your chances of getting colon, stomach and other cancers. The Food Guide Pyramid recommends 6 - 11 servings of breads, cereals, rice and pasta, 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruits each day. These 3 food groups are the "base" or bottom of the Food Guide Pyramid. You do not have to stop eating meat or dairy products. Choose lean meat and low fat cheese, milk and yogurt.

#### Eat a low fat diet.

This is easy to do if you base your diet on fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

#### Be physically active.

Physical activity may be connected to developing colon cancer. It can help to reduce your chances of being overweight, which is also linked to some cancers such as endometrial (cancer of the lining of the uterus) and colon cancer.

#### If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than 1 - 2 drinks each day.

Alcohol has been linked to several cancers including mouth and liver cancer.

Barbecued meats and highly salted foods such as luncheon meats like ham may also be linked to some kinds of cancer.

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- References:
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  2. "Diet Can Reduce Risk of Cancer," P. Kendall, CO State Univ. Coop. Ext., 1997,
  3. "Moving Towards a Plant-Based Diet," Amer. Inst. for Cancer Research, 1998

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