

**EXTENSION**

Nutrition for Older Adults: Dietary and Health Guidelines To Lower The Risk Of Cancer

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Cancer

Cancer is second leading cause of death in the United States. Many factors may have a role in cancer development.

Genetic Factors

Some cancers may have an inherited genetic factor. Knowing your family history of cancer is important.

Immune Factors

A healthy immune system destroys foreign cells. A weak immune system may not recognize cancer cells as foreign. This can allow uncontrolled cancer cell growth.

Environmental Factors

Some environmental factors may increase the risk of certain types of cancer such as:

- Excess radiation and sunlight.
- Water and air pollution.

Lifestyle Factors

Some lifestyle factors known to increase cancer risk include:

- Smoking.
- Physical inactivity.
 - Lack of physical activity may have a direct role in the development of certain types of cancer.

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- Lack of physical activity may also increase the risk of obesity which is a risk factor for certain types of cancer.

Dietary Factors

Some dietary factors may increase the risk of cancer. Other dietary factors may lower the risk of cancer.

Some dietary factors may increase risk by initiating cancer development:

- Very high levels of some pesticides.
 - Levels permitted on fruits and vegetables are safe.
 - Benefit of fruits and vegetables far exceed any potential risk.
- High alcohol intake.
 - High alcohol intake is linked to certain types of cancer.
- Certain meat preparation methods.
 - Frying
 - Broiling
 - Grilling
 - Smoking
 - Salt curing.
- Fruits and vegetables may protect against this risk.

Other dietary factors may increase risk by promoting cancer development once it has started:

- High fat intake.
 - High saturated fat intake may increase the risk of certain types of cancer.
 - High fat diets may also increase the risk of obesity which is a risk factor for certain types of cancer.
 - However, omega-3 fatty acids found in seafood may lower risk.
- Obesity.
 - Obesity is linked with increased risk of certain types of cancer. This may be related to high fat intake, high calorie intake or low physical activity.
- High muscle meat intake.
 - High muscle meat intake is linked to certain types of cancer. This may be related to:
 - Preparation method
 - Calories from fat
 - Type of fat intake
 - Diets high in muscle meat may also be low in fruits, vegetables which help lower cancer risk.

Still other dietary factors may lower cancer risk by protecting against cancer development:

- Fruits; vegetables; whole grains; and beans, peas and lentils. These foods

contain compounds that may help lower cancer risk:

- Dietary fiber.
- Antioxidants including vitamin C and vitamin E.
- Phytochemicals.
- Seafood provides omega 3 fatty acids and low-fat dairy foods provide calcium. These nutrients may also help lower risk of certain types of cancer.

Advice to Lower Cancer Risk:

Some guidelines to help lower cancer risk are:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.
- Consume ample fruits; vegetables; whole grains; beans, peas and lentils; seafood and low-fat dairy.
- Choose foods with less fat. When consuming fats choose polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats and oils over saturated and trans fats.
- Choose foods with less added salt and sodium.
- Use alcohol in moderation.
- Abstain from smoking.

Sources

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