



Reduce cancer risk

The role of diet and exercise

Cancer has many causes, some of them still unknown. But what you eat (or don't eat) and how active you are can influence your risk of developing cancer.

The following recommendations can help reduce your risk.

Maintain a healthy weight.

Calculate your body mass index (BMI), then find ways to reach your healthy weight in our weight management center.

Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity.

Try to get 30 minutes most days of the week. Even everyday activities — like walking and household chores — count. Find out how many calories you burn running errands, doing dishes, and other daily tasks with the Burn it off! fitness calculator.

Skip the soda.

Hidden sugar in soft drinks can add up to several pounds a year. Choose substitutes for sugary drinks.

Eat mostly plant-based foods.

Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes, such as beans. Plant foods contain many nutrients and fiber that can help protect the body from a variety of diseases, including cancer.

Limit red meat and avoid processed meat.

Eat less red meat (beef, pork, and lamb). Choose more chicken, fish, and alternatives to meat, such as beans, lentils, and tofu. Avoid processed meats such as lunch meats, hot dogs, and salami.

Drink alcohol in moderation.

If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation — up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men. Moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages (3 to 4 drinks per week, no matter the type of alcohol) is associated with a 30 percent increased risk of breast cancer recurrence, according to a 2009 Kaiser Permanente study [↗](#). Talk to your doctor about the risks of drinking alcohol.

Eat fewer salty foods.

This includes foods processed with salt. Many packaged and processed foods are high in salt (such

as frozen entrees and canned soups). Choose low-sodium options instead. Better yet, eat fresh food whenever possible.

Get nutrients from food.

Make food your first and best source of vitamins and minerals to protect against cancer. Don't rely on supplements for prevention. Some studies link use of supplemental vitamins and minerals with an increased risk of cancer.

Eat right on the run.

Fast, convenient foods usually have fewer vitamins and minerals and more calories, sugar, sodium, and fat. Choose healthy, nutritious foods you can eat on the go.

Related links

Good nutrition during cancer care

Source: *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective* [↗](#); American Institute for Cancer Research; Kaiser Permanente Division of Research [↗](#)

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Additional Kaiser Permanente reviewers

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