

Healthy Lifestyle Recommendations for Cancer Survivors

Take charge of your health by adopting healthy behaviors. Healthy lifestyle changes may reduce the risk of some cancers coming back. They can also lessen the risk of other cancers and many chronic diseases. Below are four pillars of a healthy lifestyle:

Get to and Stay at a Healthy Weight

Staying at a healthy weight is one of the most important things you can do to reduce your cancer risk and the risk of some cancers coming back.



Knowing your body mass index (BMI) can help you find your healthy weight. Striving for a BMI in the 18.5 to 24.9 range is a good goal. You can find your BMI at nhlbi.nih.gov/health.



Making sensible, doable changes to your diet and fitness routine is the best way to achieve lasting success.

Be Physically Active

After a cancer diagnosis, try to return to your normal daily routine as soon as possible, with the approval of your health care team.

The American Cancer Society recommends 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. Or, you can try for 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous exercise per week.

- › Include strength-training at least twice each week.
- › To make fitness more fun, have family or friends join in.
- › Try listening to music, podcasts or audio books while you work out.

Limit how long you spend sitting, lying down, watching TV, using your phone or playing computer or video games.



Follow a Healthy Eating Pattern: Focus on Plant Foods

Plant foods are the basis of healthy eating:

- › **Vegetables:** Aim to eat at least 2½ cups of vegetables per day. Try to eat a variety of colorful veggies, including:
 - Dark green foods like spinach, broccoli, kale, collard greens, bok choy and dark green lettuces
 - Red and orange vegetables such as bell peppers, carrots, tomatoes, butternut and acorn squashes, pumpkin and sweet potatoes
 - Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbages
- › **Whole Fruits:** Aim to eat at least 1½ cups of fruit per day. Try to eat a colorful variety of fruits. Limit fruit juices, which are high in sugar and contain less fiber and nutrients than whole fruit.
- › **Beans and Lentils:** Eat more meals made with fiber-rich beans and lentils, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, white beans, chickpeas, soybeans and other soy foods. These foods are also good plant sources of protein.
- › **Whole Grains:** Choose whole grains. Oatmeal, brown rice, whole-grain breads, whole-grain pastas, whole-grain cereals, quinoa and popcorn are all whole-grain foods.
- › **Nuts and Seeds:** All nuts and seeds provide healthy fats, protein, fiber and a variety of vitamins and minerals.

A healthy diet need not be strictly vegetarian. But try to eat less meat protein at meals and include more vegetarian meals weekly.



A healthy diet limits or does not include:

- ▶ **Red Meat:** If you choose to eat red meat, such as beef, pork and lamb, the American Institute for Cancer Research recommends no more than three portions or 18 ounces (cooked) per week. Instead, choose beans, lentils, chicken, turkey, fish and seafood as your main protein sources.
- ▶ **Processed Meats:** Processed meats include bacon, sausage, ham, bologna, hot dogs and deli meats. Eat these foods rarely, if at all.
- ▶ **Sugary Drinks:** Soda, sports and energy drinks, fruit drinks and sweetened coffee and tea drinks contain large amounts of sugar. A diet high in sugar can contribute to weight gain. Instead, drink mostly water and unsweetened drinks.
- ▶ **Highly Processed Foods and Refined Grain Products:** Processed foods are high in calories and often high in added sugars and unhealthy fats. These include ice cream, cookies, baked goods, sugary cereals, chips, candy and fried foods.



Do not rely on supplements to reduce your risk of your cancer coming back. Whole foods, like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds, are the best sources of vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients. Research shows that supplements don't offer the same health benefits as whole foods.

Avoid or Limit Alcohol

It is best not to drink alcohol. If you do choose to drink alcohol, women should have no more than one drink per day, and men should have no more than two drinks per day. A drink is 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of liquor. All types of alcohol increase cancer risk.



Notes:

To speak with an oncology dietitian, please call:

Morristown Medical Center: 973-971-6232

Overlook Medical Center: 908-522-5347

Chilton Medical Center: 973-831-5314

Newton and Hackettstown Medical Centers: Contact your provider for nutritional resources.

Additional Resources:

American Cancer Society: cancer.org

American Institute for Cancer Research: aicr.org