

NUTRITION BITES

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CARE MANAGEMENT

Prioritizing Nutrition for Cancer Prevention Recognizing National Cancer Prevention Month

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According to the American Cancer Society, at least 18% of all cancers diagnosed in the United States are related to excess body weight, physical inactivity, excess alcohol consumption and/or poor nutrition and therefore could be prevented with diet and lifestyle changes. The American Cancer Society along with

the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund has published guidelines regarding diet and lifestyle recommendations for cancer prevention. With February recognizing National Cancer Prevention Month, now is the perfect time to brush up on recommendations for cancer prevention and consider lifestyle changes you can make now.

Be a Healthy Weight

Maintaining a healthy weight is one of the most important actions you can take to protect yourself from cancer as well as decrease your risk for other health conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Evidence demonstrates a strong connection between excess body fat and cancer risk. Excessive body fat can trigger inflammation as well as increase production of estrogen, insulin and other hormones that can increase opportunities for cancer development.

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is not a piece of cake (pun intended) but can be accomplished

through diet changes and physical activity combined with persistence. Successful and maintainable weight loss is achieved through lifestyle changes that promote gradual weight loss. For helpful resources to assist with weight loss and maintenance, check out the [New American Plate](#) from the American Institute for Cancer Research or [MyPlate](#) from the USDA.

Be Physically Active

Physical activity and exercise can lower cancer risk, help to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and lessen risk for several chronic diseases. Thirty minutes of physical activity five times a week is recommended to improve your health. When combined with a healthy diet, physical activity can naturally lead to a healthy weight.

Wondering how to go from couch potato to gym rat? If it has been a while since you have been physically active, plan to start slow by setting realistic, achievable goals, making a plan and increasing your activity over time. As you start your efforts for regular activity, start with a series of 15-minute exercise sessions for five days of the week and then add on additional time over several weeks to get past the 30-minute mark per session. The simplest way to get started is to walk as no equipment is needed and it can be done anytime, anywhere. Go for brisk walks for 30 minutes a day, five days a week to meet your activity goals. Be sure to pick activities that interest you or exercise with a friend for support and to promote accountability.





Eat a Diet Rich in Whole Grains, Vegetables, Fruits and Beans

The saying “eat the rainbow” is not just for something that is told to kids to get them to eat their vegetables. Scientific evidence shows that eating mostly plant-based foods, such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits and beans, plays a role in preventing cancer and contributing to a healthier life. Plant-based foods are high in fiber, nutrients and phytochemicals (or plant compounds) that may help to prevent cancer and manage your weight.

An easy way to work toward increasing your intake of plant foods is to use this easy method to build a healthier plate. For each meal, aim to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables. The more variety of colors and types of fruits and vegetables, the better as different colors and types of fruits and vegetables provide unique benefits. Next, fill one-quarter of your plate with grains. Grains include bread, pasta, cereal, grits, rice, tortillas and oatmeal (just to name a few). Aim to choose whole grain options, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice, as these foods provide more fiber than their refined counterparts. Lastly, the remaining quarter of your plate is for protein foods. Commonly we think of fish, seafood, meat, poultry and eggs as protein sources, but nuts, seeds, beans, peas and lentils are good sources of plant protein. As much as possible, choose lean animal proteins and incorporate plant sources of protein into your diet. Setting your plate up in these proportions promotes the increased intake of fruits and vegetables as well as controlling the portion size of the higher calorie food choices.

Limit Processed Foods High in Fat, Starch or Sugar

Limiting these items, including fast food, in your daily diet can help to control your calorie intake and make it easier to maintain a healthy weight. Evidence shows that diets high in “fast foods” and other processed foods high in fat, starch and sugars are connected to weight gain, overweight and obesity.

Successfully limiting the intake of these foods can require planning as we often reach for processed food due to busy schedules and eating on the run. Fill up on fast

foods that feature vegetables, fruit, whole grains and beans such as a burrito bowl with brown rice and pinto beans or soup and a salad. Stock your fridge, cabinet and desk drawer with healthy, easy-to-grab snacks such as nuts, fruit and carrots with hummus. If you are dining out, order small-sized items and decline the option to upsize.

Limit Consumption of Red and Processed Meats

A lot of confusion and mixed messages surround the intake of red meat, including beef, pork and lamb, as well as processed meats. Red meat is a good source of protein, iron, zinc and vitamin B12 but eating more than 18 ounces of red meat a week can increase cancer risk. If you eat red meat, aim for no more than three portions (or a total of 12-18 ounces cooked) a week. It is recommended to skip processed meats. Processed meats include meats that are smoked, cured, salted, fermented or have added preservatives. This includes hot dogs, bacon, sausage and deli meats. Approach processed meats as a once-in-a-while treat rather than a daily staple.

Limit Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Sugar-sweetened beverages are a source of excess sugar and calories. Drinking a lot of sugary drinks, such as espresso beverages, soda and sweetened tea, can impact your weight and contribute to weight gain. Substituting low-calorie beverages, such as water, sparkling water and unsweetened tea or coffee provides hydration without the unnecessary calories.

Limit Alcohol Consumption

Research supports that lower alcohol intake is associated with lower cancer risk. Any reduction in alcohol consumption will lower your risk of cancer development. The best approach for cancer prevention is to avoid alcohol intake. If you choose to drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women. Recommendations are different based on gender as higher levels of alcohol are seen in women’s bloodstreams as compared to men’s, therefore exposing women’s organs to high levels of alcohol.



Featured Recipe

Peppers Stuffed with Turkey and Wild Rice

For complete recipe and nutrition facts: [American Institute for Cancer Research](#)

Makes 4 servings (1 pepper per serving)

Per serving: 330 calories, 13 g total fat (3 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 80 mg cholesterol, 27 g carbohydrates, 28 g protein, 5 g dietary fiber, 240 mg sodium, 7 g sugar, 0 g added sugar.



INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp olive oil
½ medium onion, chopped
1 cup coarsely chopped mushrooms (any kind)
1 lb ground turkey
2 cups baby spinach leaves, chopped
1 cup diced tomatoes
2 cloves garlic, minced, or 1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp oregano
¾ cup chopped carrots, steamed and cut into ½-inch chunks
1 ½ cups cooked wild rice
4 large green or red bell peppers, tops removed and seeded*
Salt and pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil. Sauté onion and mushrooms until onions are translucent.
3. Add turkey, spinach, tomatoes, garlic and seasonings and cook until turkey is cooked through, about 5-6 minutes.
4. Place turkey mixture in large mixing bowl and add carrots and wild rice. Combine well. Using spoon, lightly pack mixture into peppers.
5. Place peppers in 9-inch square oven dish, add ¼ cup water to bottom of pan and bake about 45-50 minutes or until peppers are just tender. Serve.

***Tip: Save pepper tops to cover peppers during baking for a more moist filling.**

