
NUTRITION TIPS FOR BREAST CANCER

Provided by Kimberly Dalzell, PhD, RD, LD

Program Director, Holistic Nutrition Services

Author of *Challenge Cancer and Win! Step-by-step nutrition action plans for your specific cancer*

For more information: www.challengecancer.com

Healthy eating is essential for any one who wants to fight against the cancer process. Proper nutrition can rebuild cells, stimulate immune system function and protect your body from chemical and environmental damage. Whether undergoing treatment or in recovery, changing your diet now may significantly decrease your chances for a cancer recurrence. Here are my top suggestions to maximize your chances for optimal health:

Maintain an optimal weight.

Research studies indicate that weight gain, body fat and estrogen levels affect breast and endometrial cancer risk. Excess calorie intake causes a release of insulin by the body and creates an influx of growth factors in the body. These growth factors, highly active in breast tissue, can lead to indiscriminate cellular changes. Furthermore, studies have shown that women with breast cancer who were overweight had more recurrences and lower survival rates than women who were leaner. On the other hand, if you are losing weight, you compromise your health by not providing your body with adequate amounts of nutrients that can support immune system function. If you are in active treatment, you should be monitoring your weight every three days or so. As little as a 5% weight loss can dramatically reduce your ability to cope with treatment side effects and can lead to malnutrition, a complication that causes 40% of deaths in cancer patients.

Face fats.

It's time to stop eating all that fat! You should consume no more than 20% of your daily calories from fat. Consuming too much fat, or the wrong kinds of fat, has been associated with inflammatory conditions, immune system depression and cancer cell growth. Begin reducing fat in your diet by avoiding French fries, chips, and deep fat fried fish or vegetables. Watch what you spread on your bread, too. Limit fat spreads like butter or nut butters to no more than 2 teaspoons per day. It is no longer enough to avoid total fats; you have to watch the amount of unhealthy fats as well. Unhealthy fats are either saturated in nature (derived from animal products) or unsaturated fats that have been chemically altered through hydrogenation (found in margarines, salad dressings, baked goods, packaged convenience foods). Stay away from tropical fats, too, like

coconut and palm oils. Limit your intake of nuts and seeds. Eat red meat only on special occasions; eat more fish, especially the kind that contain omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, tuna and mackerel. Avoid high fat cheeses and milks; look for dairy products that are made from skim milk and that don't contain hormones. Plain, nonfat yogurt is recommended at least three days per week. Replace hurtful fats with small amounts of beneficial oils derived from olive, canola and flax seed.

Don't be so sweet.

If you are like most Americans, you are consuming over 100 pounds of sugar a year. Sugar, as well as other unrefined carbohydrates, can wreak havoc with blood sugar levels, creating an environment favorable for cancer cell growth. Additionally, eating sweets may impact the immune system by reducing white blood cell production. You should limit your unrefined flour and sugar intake to less than 10% of total dietary carbohydrate. The majority of your starches should come from unprocessed, whole grain bread, cereal, pasta and rice. Besides watching the obvious high sugar foods like cakes, cookies, candies and pastries, you should look for hidden sugars on product labels. Words that end in -ose, like glucose, fructose, lactose, and sucrose are examples of sweeteners added to commercial foods. In an effort to stabilize blood sugar levels, always choose meals or snacks that contain carbohydrates and proteins. This rule applies to you "juicers" out there, too. Never drink juices alone; have them with a side order of nuts, seeds or add in some soy protein powder.

Find the joy of soy.

That's right. Veggie burgers, tofu, tempeh, miso. All the foods you may have heard about but attempted to avoid. They won't go away, and you need them now more than ever before. Besides providing a protein alternative to animal meats, soy has demonstrated effectiveness in slowing tumor growth and limiting metastatic properties of breast cancer cells. The American Dietetic Association has issued a position statement that anyone with hormonally sensitive cancers may take in a moderate amount of soy from food sources, but should avoid concentrated sources of soy found in isolated soy powders. Look for "lite" versions of tofu and soy milk, which will have less fat than their regular counterparts. Experiment with soy shakes, stir fried tempeh and bite into a veggie dog today!

Eat 5-a-Day.

Nature has packed cancer fighting fiber and plant chemicals into almost every one of these naturally sweet and delicious packages. You should eat at least 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruits each day. Lycopenes, isolated from cooked tomato products, have been found to inhibit the growth of breast cancer cells. You should also eat more grapefruits and tangerines. Citrus fruits contain limonoids, plant chemicals that may have the ability to stop breast cancer cells from dividing. Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and onions have also been found to be beneficial for breast cancers. These vegetables contain indoles, which can deactivate estrogen.

Bulk up.

You need between 25 and 35 grams of dietary fiber per day. It is highly unlikely that you are currently consuming that much, especially if you are eating any white bread, white rice, white pasta, white anything! The rule to remember is, "brown is better"; look for whole wheat products. Fiber acts to detoxify the body by removing cancer-causing secondary bile acids, excess estrogens and cholesterol through the stool. Plant fibers, accompanied by lots of fluid, are necessary for normal elimination and increase friendly bacteria in the colon. You should strive for a mixed fiber diet; high in soluble (psyllium, oats, legumes) and insoluble (foods with seeds, strings and peels) fibers.

Drink up.

Flush your system with plenty of purified water. You need over 64 ounces of fluid per day to keep yourself hydrated and facilitate normal physiological functions. Avoid consuming beverages that tend to dehydrate, like caffeine-containing colas, coffees or teas. One exception to this rule is green tea. Although it contains caffeine, it also has catechins that offer antioxidant benefits.

Supplement your diet.

You may benefit from the following dietary supplements. Take with meals unless otherwise indicated. Please communicate with your doctor when you begin to take, or change, your dietary supplements.

Multivitamin, without iron
Mixed carotenoids, 15 - 60 mg
Vitamin C with bioflavonoids, 1,000 - 6,000 mg
Vitamin E, 400 - 1000 IU
Selenium, 200 - 800 mcg
EPA/DHA, 1,000 - 6,000 mg
CoQ10, 100 - 400 mg
Quercetin, 500 - 1,500 mg

Get some expert advice!

Why not fight your cancer with the power of a professional nutritional consult? Don't jeopardize your chances for a positive outcome by guessing which dietary changes or supplements are most important for you! Holistic nutrition counseling is available to meet all of your nutritional health needs. Meal planning, recipes, and tips for easy dietary change will accompany a recommended dietary supplement regimen, designed by a doctor of holistic nutrition specifically for you! Call us for more details.