

Healthy eating.

Reduce
your risk
of cancer

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Cancer Council

 **Cancer
Council**
WA

Extensive research has been conducted on the link between diet and cancer. The evidence is not entirely conclusive but the following links have been found.

Foods that reduce your risk of cancer

Foods rich in **dietary fibre**, particularly wholegrains, may reduce your risk of bowel cancer. Other foods high in dietary fibre include fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds and legumes.

Non-starchy vegetables and fruit may lower your risk of developing cancers of the lung and digestive tracts, including the mouth, throat, larynx (voice box), nasopharynx, oesophagus (gullet), stomach and bowel.

Consuming **dairy foods**, including milk, cheese and yoghurt, may reduce your risk of developing bowel cancer.



Foods that increase your risk of cancer

Diets high in **red meat** may increase the chance of developing bowel cancer. **Processed and cured meats** such as salami, bacon and ham seem to be of most concern.

Diets very high in **salt** (sodium) have been linked to an increased risk of stomach cancer. This evidence comes from countries where salting of foods is a common preserving method due to the lack of refrigeration. In countries where refrigeration is commonly used for storage of perishable foods, stomach cancer is less common.

Eating a healthy diet reduces the risk of becoming overweight. Carrying excess weight (overweight/obesity) increases the risk of 13 types of cancer including bowel, pancreatic, oesophageal, ovarian, and breast cancer (in post-menopausal women).

Avoiding **junk foods and drinks** that promote weight gain, such as fast food and sugary drinks, is recommended for cancer prevention.

This brochure provides practical information to help you improve your diet and help reduce your risk of developing cancer.

After completing treatment, cancer survivors should aim to follow the recommendations in this brochure (if able to do so and unless otherwise advised by a health professional), to help reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

Eat plenty of plant foods

This includes fruits, vegetables, wholegrain and wholemeal breads and cereals, legumes, nuts and seeds. These foods are a great source of fibre, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals (see right). They are also low in energy (kilojoules or Calories) which helps maintain a healthy weight.

Dietary fibre

Fibre is a part of plant food that our bodies cannot digest. There are different types of fibre - including soluble fibre, insoluble fibre and resistant starch - and all are beneficial. Fibre is found in plant foods such as fruit, vegetables, grains, cereal products, legumes, nuts and seeds. Research has found that consuming a diet high in dietary fibre may lower the risk of bowel cancer. Bowel cancer is a very common cancer affecting both men and women in Western Australia.



Eating plenty of high fibre foods also assists with weight management, reducing blood cholesterol and sugar levels, preventing or managing constipation, as well as reducing the risk of developing heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Women should aim to have 25g of fibre each day and men should aim to have 30g each day. If you usually choose wholegrain and wholemeal varieties of breads and cereal foods, and eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables on most days, then you are likely to meet your fibre needs.

Phytochemicals and antioxidants

Phytochemicals are nutrients found in plant foods. Thousands have been identified, including many with antioxidant properties. Antioxidants protect cells against damage and may reduce the risk of developing certain types of cancer. The best way to get more phytochemicals into your diet is to eat more plant-based foods, everyday.



Eat more fruit and vegetables

Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables of different colours. We recommend thoroughly washing all fresh fruit and vegetables in water.

Aim to eat at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables daily.

A serve of fruit (150g) is:

- 1 medium piece, such as an apple or banana
- 2 small pieces, such as apricots, kiwifruit or plums
- 1 cup of diced fruit or canned fruit (in natural juice)

Or only occasionally (max 1-2 times per week):

- 1½ tablespoons of sultanas or 4 dried apricot halves (30g)
- ½ cup 100% fruit juice

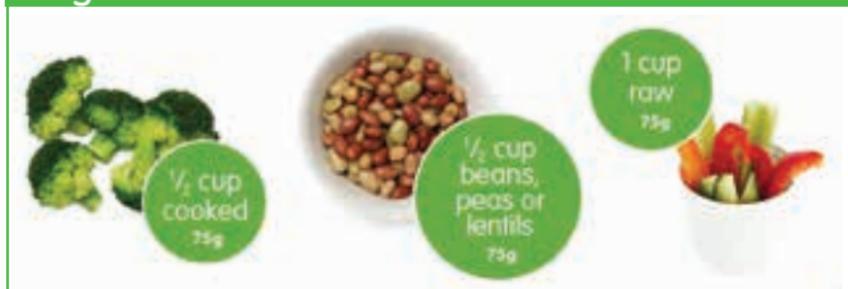
Fruit



A serve of vegetables (75g) is:

- ½ cup of cooked vegetables
- 1 cup of salad vegetables
- ½ potato
- ½ cup cooked legumes, for example beans, peas or lentils

Vegetables



TIPS: Eating more fruit and vegetables:

- Fill half your plate with vegetables.
- Include at least three different coloured vegetables in your main meal.
- Include salad or vegie sticks with your lunch.
- Cook vegetables in different ways, such as roasting, grilling or barbequing.
- Use frozen, dried or canned fruit and vegetables for convenience or if fresh is not available.
- Adapt your recipes to include more vegetables, for example add carrot, zucchini, and corn to pasta sauce, casseroles and stir-fries.
- Enjoy fruit as a snack or for dessert.
- Add fruit as a topping to breakfast cereal.

Fruit and vegetable juices

It is best to eat whole fruit and vegetables because they provide more fibre and less sugar than juices. Consider that it takes 6 oranges to make just one glass of juice – more than you can eat in one sitting!

100% fruit juice can be a healthy choice if drunk in appropriate amounts. Try to limit fruit juice to half a cup 1-2 times per week.

Frozen, canned and dried fruit and vegetables

Seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables are good value for money, and tend to be tastier. Frozen, canned or dried fruit and vegetables are great alternatives and are also convenient. Choose no-added-salt or reduced-salt canned vegetables, and fruit canned in juice (not syrup).

Eat a variety of wholegrain and wholemeal cereal foods

Wholegrain foods include wholemeal and mixed grain breads and cereals, rolled oats, quinoa, barley, buckwheat, popcorn, grainy crackers, wholemeal pasta and brown rice. These foods contain more fibre, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals than refined cereals like white bread and white rice.

Up to 6 serves of grain foods each day is recommended for adults, choosing mostly wholegrain or high fibre varieties. Women over 50 and men over 70 require less than this.

A serve of breads and cereals is:

- 1 slice of bread, ½ bread roll or wrap (40g)
- 3 crispbreads (35g)
- ½ cup of cooked rice, pasta or noodles (75-120g)
- ½ cup of cooked porridge (120g)
- ⅔ cup of breakfast cereal (30g)
- ¼ cup of untoasted muesli (30g)

Grains and cereals



TIPS: Eating more wholegrain and wholemeal food:

- Choose wholegrain, wholemeal and mixed grain breads, pitas and dry biscuits.
- Choose wholegrain or high fibre breakfast cereal, porridge or muesli.
- Choose wholemeal pasta and brown rice.
- Use wholemeal, or if preferred, use half white and half wholemeal flour in baking.
- Use wholemeal breadcrumbs or oats to coat foods.
- Experiment with different kinds of grains. Add barley to soups, use quinoa in salads or try rye or spelt breads.



Add sources of dairy and dairy alternatives to your diet each day

This includes milk from cows, goats and sheep, cheese, yoghurt, and calcium fortified plant milks such as soy, almond, rice and oat milk. Dairy products are an excellent source of calcium and protein as well a source of vitamin A, riboflavin, vitamin B12 and zinc.

At least 2 ½ serves of dairy foods and alternatives each day is recommended for adults. Women 50+ and men 70+ require more than this.

A serve of dairy and alternatives is:

- 1 cup milk (250mL) – fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk
- ½ cup evaporated milk (120mL)
- 2 slices hard cheese (40g) such as cheddar
- ½ cup ricotta cheese (120g)
- ¾ cup yoghurt (200g)
- 1 cup plant milk (250mL) with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100mL – soy, rice, almond, oat

** Note: not all dairy foods belong in this group. Ice cream, butter and cream are considered junk foods and should not be eaten every day.*

Dairy and alternatives



TIPS: Including more dairy and alternatives

- Make a smoothie with yoghurt, milk and your favourite fruit.
- Snack on calcium-rich nuts like Brazil nuts or almonds.
- Include a small amount of your favourite cheese in salad.
- Have a small bowl of wholegrain cereal with milk as a snack.
- Add reduced fat yoghurt to a fruit salad.

Vegetarian or vegan diets

People following vegetarian and vegan diets may have higher calcium needs because some plant sources of calcium also contain compounds that make it hard for the body to absorb that calcium. Those who follow a vegan diet or avoid milk products should consume alternative calcium-fortified products and seek advice from a health professional about whether they need to take supplements.



Include lean meat, chicken, seafood, eggs, nuts or legumes each day

These foods contain essential nutrients such as protein, iron, niacin and vitamin B12. Red meat is a very good source of iron and zinc.

To reduce your risk of developing bowel cancer, we recommend eating only moderate amounts of red meat (less than 500 g per week) and limiting processed and cured meats such as ham, salami and bacon. Chicken, seafood, eggs, nuts, tofu and legumes are good alternatives to red meat.

Legumes (also known as pulses) include peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas. They are a good source of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre, carbohydrates, protein and iron.

It's recommended that adults eat 2-3 serves of lean meat, chicken, seafood, eggs, nuts or legumes each day. Limit red meat intake to no more than 500g per week.

A serve of meat and alternatives is:

- 65g cooked beef, veal, lamb, pork, kangaroo (90-100g raw)
- 80g cooked chicken or turkey (100g raw)
- 100g of cooked fish fillet (115g raw) or one small can of fish
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup (150g) of cooked legumes, such as lentils, chickpeas, split peas, dried or canned beans
- 30g of nuts or seeds such as peanuts or almonds (no added salt or sugar)
- 170g tofu

Meat and alternatives



TIPS: Enjoying the right amount of meat and meat alternatives

- Include a few fish meals each week, for example grilled fish or canned tuna.
- Include some legume-based meals each week. Legumes can be added to pasta sauces, casseroles, soups or salads.
- Fill half your plate with vegetables and don't think of meat as the main part of the meal.
- Make dips from pureed legumes.
- Blend red beans to use as a pancake filling.



Reduce the junk

There are lots of reasons why junk foods and drinks creep into our diet. They're convenient, tasty, available everywhere and heavily promoted. What used to be an occasional treat is now becoming part of our everyday diet.

Junk food contains lots of energy (kilojoules), salt, sugar, and saturated and trans fats while being low in fruit, vegetables and wholegrains.

Eating too much junk food can lead to overweight and obesity, which is a risk factor for 13 types of cancer. Junk food takes the place of healthier foods that help reduce your risk of cancer.

Examples of junk foods and drinks:

- Hot chips, burgers, hot dogs and pizza from fast food outlets
- Cakes, donuts, ice-cream, biscuits and muffins
- Chocolate and lollies
- Pastries, pies, deep fried spring rolls and sausage rolls
- Processed meats such as bacon, salami and ham
- Crisps and similar snack foods
- Soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks, cordial and fruit drinks
- Alcoholic beverages



Preparing healthy food at home

Many of your favourite meals can be cooked at home using healthier ingredients and cooking methods.

TIPS: Healthy cooking at home

- Make half your plate vegetables.
- Choose wholemeal and wholegrain varieties of pasta, bread, rice and flour.
- Use healthy cooking methods, such as grilling, baking or steaming.
- Use non-stick cookware and try an oil spray to reduce the amount of oil you use.
- Use reduced-fat dairy products.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim all visible fat from meat before cooking.
- Remove skin from chicken.
- Swap sausages for home-made patties.
- Look for 'low-salt', 'no added salt' or 'salt-reduced' products, for example, salt-reduced gravies, sauces, stocks and condiments.
- Only use small amounts of very salty ingredients (such as soy sauce, olives or anchovies) in cooking.
- Try to select products with less than 400 mg of sodium per 100 grams of product.
- Limit salt used in cooking and at the table. Flavour foods with herbs, spices, lemon juice or vinegar instead.

Quick and healthy snacks

- Vegetable sticks and hummus.
- Handful of unsalted nuts.
- Fruit toast.
- Fruit and reduced fat yoghurt.
- Wholegrain crackers and cheese.
- Wholegrain toast and avocado.

Drinks

Water and reduced-fat milk are the best drink choices.

100% fruit juice can be a suitable drink if consumed in small quantities (less than half a cup 1-2 times per week). Soft drinks, energy drinks, slushies, pre-made iced tea and sports drinks are high in sugar and contain very few vitamins and minerals. They contribute a lot of energy (kilojoules) whilst providing hardly any nutrients. They are not a good choice.

While more research is still needed, the evidence suggests that regular, moderate consumption of tea and coffee has either no substantial effect on cancer risk, or has a small benefit. In particular, coffee may decrease the risk of developing cancer of the liver and endometrium (womb).

Drinking scalding hot beverages above 65°C may increase the risk of oesophageal cancer and should be avoided.



Drinking more water

- Start the day by drinking a glass of water.
- Carry a refillable water bottle with you.
- Have a bottle or jug of water on your desk at work.
- If you prefer flavoured water, try adding cut-up lemon, cucumber, strawberry, mint or kiwi fruit to your jug or bottle of water.
- Ask for a jug of water with your meal when in restaurants.
- Drink a glass of water during each meal.
- Hot water with a slice of lemon is a good alternative to tea or coffee.
- Drink water regularly during exercise, about every 10 to 15 minutes.



Do we need vitamin and mineral supplements?

If you are eating a wide variety of nutritious foods, you generally do not need vitamin or mineral supplements. Getting vitamins and minerals from tablets is not as good as getting them from food. Whole foods deliver your body with a package of nutrients that act together to support good health. Whole foods have many other beneficial substances such as fibre, phytochemicals and antioxidants.

Some vitamins and minerals can be harmful in large doses. It is hard to overdose on these vitamins and minerals in real food, but it is possible to have too much as part of a supplement.

If you are taking vitamin and mineral supplements, or are thinking about starting them we advise that you talk to your doctor or dietitian. If your doctor or dietitian has recommended you take vitamin or mineral supplements, don't stop taking the supplements without discussing it with them.



Key points

- Eat plenty of plant foods.
- Limit red meat to no more than 500g a week and avoid processed meats.
- Add dairy foods to your diet each day.
- Avoid junk foods.
- Aim to get your nutrients from food not supplements.

Whilst our main focus is on cancer prevention, Cancer Council WA recognises that following the healthy eating recommendations made in this brochure can also reduce the chance of developing other chronic diseases.

Healthy eating can help prevent overweight and obesity and can lower your risk of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis and dental disease, as well as some cancers. Healthy eating is vital for your overall health.

Healthy eating is also important during and after cancer treatment.

Please contact Cancer Council WA on 13 11 20 for our 'Nutrition and Cancer' booklet for more information.



What can I do to reduce my risk of cancer?

- Stop smoking
- Move your body
- Avoid excess weight gain
- Eat for health
- Be SunSmart
- Avoid alcohol
- Talk to your doctor about cancer

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For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, speak to a Cancer Council nurse on **13 11 20**. Calls are confidential and available statewide Monday to Friday during business hours.