American Cancer Society



Diet and Physical Activity Cancer Fact Sheet

for Patients and Caregivers

Getting to and staying at a healthy weight, following a healthy eating pattern, avoiding alcohol, and moving more can help reduce your risk of cancer.

Impact on Cancer Risk

- **Excess body weight** may increase the risk of some cancers, including endometrial, esophageal, female breast (postmenopausal), colon and rectal, kidney, liver, pancreatic, stomach, gallbladder, ovarian, thyroid, and meningioma, as well as multiple myeloma. It may also increase the risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma; mouth, pharynx, and larynx cancers; male breast cancer; and fatal prostate cancer.
- **Not following a healthy eating pattern** may increase the risk of colorectal, mouth, esophagus, throat, and voice box cancers. Diets high in red and processed meat, highly processed foods and refined-grain products, and sugary drinks are linked to a higher risk of some cancers. Diets that focus on colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans and peas), and fish or poultry are linked to a lower risk of these cancers.
- **Drinking alcohol** can increase the risk for cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, esophagus, liver, colon and rectum, and female breast. The more alcohol a person drinks, the higher their cancer risk.
- **Getting regular physical activity** helps decrease the risk of colon, female breast, endometrial, kidney, and possibly other cancers such as liver and lung.

American Cancer Society Guideline on Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention

Get to and stay at a healthy weight during your life.

- Keep body weight within the healthy range. Talk with your doctor about what a healthy weight would be for you and how you might get to it.

Move more, and sit less.

Move more.

Adults:

- Get 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week (or a combination of these). Getting at least 300 minutes is best.
- Examples of moderate-intensity activities include walking, dancing, mowing the lawn, volleyball, or bicycling.
- Examples of vigorous-intensity activities include jogging or running, fast bicycling, swimming, jumping rope, martial arts, or basketball.

Children and teens:

- Get at least 1 hour of moderate or vigorous activity each day.

Sit less.

- Avoid long periods of sitting or lying down. Spend less time sitting or lying down while watching TV, using your cell phone, playing computer or video games, or using other screen-based entertainment.

Have fun, and be fit.

- You can be active by walking, swimming, gardening, doing housework, or even dancing. Walking or biking instead of driving is a good idea if you can do it and also counts as physical activity.
- If you have children, grandchildren, or pets, playing with them and going on walks are fun ways to stay active.

Follow a healthy eating pattern with a focus on plant sources.

A healthy eating pattern means eating:

- Foods high in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients
- Foods that are not high in calories
- A colorful variety of vegetables – dark green, red, and orange
- Fiber-rich beans, lentils, and peas
- A colorful variety of whole fruits
- Whole grains (in bread, pasta, etc.) and brown rice

A healthy eating pattern means limiting or not including:

- Red meats, like beef, pork, and lamb
- Processed meats, like bacon, sausage, luncheon meats, and hot dogs
- Sugary drinks, including soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks
- Highly processed foods and refined-grain products

Tips for a healthy eating pattern:

- Fill most of your plate with colorful vegetables and fruits, beans, and whole grains.
- Choose fish, poultry, tofu, lentils, or beans as your main sources of protein instead of red meat or processed meats.
- If you eat red meats, choose lean cuts and smaller portions.

More healthy eating tips:

- Prepare meat, poultry, and fish by baking, broiling, or poaching rather than by frying or grilling.



- Make healthy choices when you eat away from home. Include vegetables, whole fruit, and other low-calorie foods instead of high-calorie foods, such as french fries, potato and other chips, ice cream, doughnuts, and other sweets. Restaurants often serve big portions, but you don't have to eat it all at one time. Ask for a to-go box, and pack up your leftovers for lunch or dinner the next day.
- If you want to enjoy high-calorie foods once in a while, eat smaller portions.
- Pay attention to food labels in the grocery store and ingredients listed on restaurant menus.
- Limit your use of creamy sauces, dressings, and dips with vegetables and fruits.

It is best not to drink alcohol.

- If you drink alcohol, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 drinks per day for men. One drink is 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.
- All types of drinks with alcohol increase your risk of cancer and other health problems. It doesn't matter whether you choose beer, white or red wine, or mixed drinks.

To learn more about diet and physical activity, visit the American Cancer Society website at **cancer.org/dietactivity** or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

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