Cancer and Diverse Audiences: How Diet and Activity Affect Risk for Some Cancers

Experts from the American Cancer Society create and update nutrition guidelines based on current scientific evidence that relates cancer risk to diet and nutrition.

Annually, 500,000 cancer-related deaths occur. The evidence suggests about one-third of these deaths are related to the food we eat. Another third is due to cigarette smoking. For the majority of Americans who do not smoke, dietary choices and physical activity are important ways a person can decrease their risk of cancer.

Recommendations:

1. Choose most of the foods you eat from plant sources.
   - Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day (2 cups of fruits and 2 cups of vegetables).
     > Include fruits or vegetables in every meal.
     > Choose fruits and vegetables for snacks such as carrots, celery, melons and apples.
   - Eat other foods from plant sources, such as breads, cereals, grain products, rice, pasta, and beans several times each day.
     > Include grain products in every meal.
     > Choose whole grains instead of processed (refined) grains.
     > Choose beans instead of meat.

2. Limit your intake of high-fat foods, especially animal sources.
   - Choose foods low in fat.
   - Eat smaller portions of high-fat foods.
   - Choose baked and broiled foods instead of fried foods.
   - Select non-fat and low-fat milk and dairy products.

3. Be physically active and maintain a healthy weight.
   - Be physically active for a total of 30 minutes or more on most days
   - Stay in your healthy weight range.

4. Limit drinking alcohol: beer, wine or hard liquor, if you drink at all.

Diet and Specific Cancers

Phytochemicals

These substances come from plants and may help protect against cancer. They can prevent potentially cancer-causing substances, or carcinogens, from forming. Some block the action of carcinogens on body tissues and organs while others stop cancer from growing. Foods with phytochemicals include: berries and citrus fruits; spinach, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower; garlic and onions; some herbs and spices; beans and nuts; orange and yellow fruits and vegetables; red grapes; soy; tea; tomatoes; and whole grains. Tip: Eating a variety of produce with different colors each day provides more phytochemicals than eating the same colors of fruits and vegetables each day.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the leading cancer among American women. It is second only to lung cancer in cancer deaths. In women, breast cancer is influenced by: circulating hormone levels throughout life; age at first menstruation; number of pregnancies; breast-feeding; obesity; and physical activity. Many studies suggest that consuming alcohol may increase the risk of breast cancer, even when consumed in moderation. Some studies suggest that diets high in fruits and vegetables decrease the risk for breast cancer.
**COLON and RECTAL CANCER**

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of death from cancer. Diets high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans have been associated with a decreased risk of colon cancer. But, a diet high in fat and red meat may increase your risk of colon and rectal cancer. Obesity and a lack of physical activity also appear to increase risk. Currently, the best approach is to consume fewer high-fat foods; limit intake of red meats; eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; be physically active; and avoid being overweight.

**ENDOMETRIAL CANCER**

Studies of endometrial cancer have found that being overweight increases risk. This connection may be due to higher estrogen levels that occur among postmenopausal women who are overweight. To reduce the risk of endometrial cancer, maintain a healthy weight by being physically active and eat healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

**LUNG CANCER**

Lung cancer is the leading cause of death by cancer among Americans. More than 80% of lung cancer cases occur as a result of smoking. Most studies have demonstrated that the risk of lung cancer among both smokers and non-smokers is lower among people who consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables every day. To reduce the risk of lung cancer, do not smoke, and eat at least 2 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruits every day.

**ORAL AND ESOPHAGEAL CANCERS**

Cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff, and alcohol increase the risk for cancers of the mouth and esophagus. Eating the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables decrease the risk of oral and esophageal cancers. To protect against these cancers, do not use tobacco in any form, do not drink more than one or two drinks of alcohol daily, if you drink at all, and eat at least 2 cups of fruits and 2 cups of vegetables each day.

**PROSTATE CANCER**

Prostate cancer is the leading cancer among American men. Scientists know that prostate cancer is related to male hormones. Intakes of animal fat, red meats, and dairy products have been found to be associated with an increase in the risk of prostate cancer. To reduce the risk of prostate cancer, limit intake of foods from animal sources, especially saturated fats and red meat, and increase the amount of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

**STOMACH CANCER**

The incidence of stomach cancer is decreasing worldwide, especially in the United States. Year-round consumption of fresh foods, refrigeration, and other improvements in food preservation methods have helped reduce the risk of cancer. A history of ulcers may increase risk. To help reduce the risk of stomach cancer, eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day (2 cups of fruits and 2 cups of vegetables).

**Diet and Specific Cancers**

At the present time, the best advice to decrease the risk of most cancers is to limit the intake of alcohol, eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, be physically active, and maintain a healthy weight.

**References**

Cancer Prevention, 1999. American Cancer Society, Inc. Atlanta GA


http://www.cancer.org/