

Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Colorectal Cancer

You can lower your risk of getting colorectal cancer by making healthy diet and lifestyle choices. Start by following the tips in the factsheet "Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Diet and Cancer Prevention Basics". It outlines steps to lower your overall cancer risk.

In addition to not smoking, the most important things you can do to prevent colorectal cancer are: stay at a healthy weight, limit the amount of alcohol you drink, limit red meat, avoid processed meats and get regular exercise. Eating plenty of fibre from foods such as vegetables, whole grains and beans; eating garlic and drinking milk as a part of your diet may also help.

Many of the healthy eating habits that lower your risk of cancer are also good for your health in general.



Steps you can take

Stay at a healthy weight.

- To find out if you are at a healthy body weight use Health Canada's BMI online calculator (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/weights-poids/guide-ld-adult/bmi_chart_java-graph_imc_java-eng.php).
- If you need to lose weight, aim to lose about 0.5-1 kilogram (1-2 pounds) each week. Eating healthy, eating less and exercising more will help you reach and stay at a healthy weight.
- Limit the amount of sugary drinks, fast foods and high fat snacks such as potato chips, other deep fried snack foods and store-bought baked goods.

- For tips on healthy weight loss, see "Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss" (package) in Additional Resources below.

Limit red meat to 500 grams (18 oz) per week and avoid processed meats.

- Red meat includes beef, pork, lamb and goat.
- Processed meats are meats preserved by smoking, curing, salting or adding chemical preservatives. For example: bacon, sausage, hot dogs, ham.
- One Canada's Food Guide serving of meat equals 75 g or 2 ½ oz of cooked meat. You may choose to eat more than one serving at a time, for example you might eat a 5 oz steak at dinner (2 servings). Overall, limit the total amount of red meat you eat in a week to no more than 500 grams (18 oz).
- Instead of red meat choose other foods from the Meat and Alternatives group. Examples include: chicken, fish, beans, lentils, eggs, nuts, seeds and nut butters. Canada's Food Guide recommends two Meat and Alternatives servings per day for women and three servings per day for men.

If you choose to drink alcohol, limit to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

- One drink is: 351mL (12 oz) bottle of beer or 142 mL (5 oz) of table wine or 43 mL (1.5 oz) of liquor (e.g., vodka, whisky, rum or gin).

Be active everyday.

- Start with 30 minutes of physical activity every day. As your fitness level improves, aim for 60 minutes or more of moderate activity (such as brisk walking, cycling, dancing, swimming). Or try 30 minutes of more intense physical activity (such as running, tennis) every day. Limit sedentary activities such as watching television and sitting at the computer.
- Exercise helps to prevent colorectal cancer and helps you reach and stay at a healthy weight.

Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans.

- These foods provide fibre. Fibre helps protect the colon. These foods also have other natural plant compounds that may protect against cancer.
- Adults should aim for 21 – 38 grams of fibre per day depending on how old you are and whether you are male or female. For more information on fibre see Additional Resources section below.

Drink milk.

- Drinking milk may help protect against colorectal cancer.
- Canada's Food Guide recommends that everyone drink 500 mL (2 cups) of milk or calcium-fortified soy beverages every day.

Include garlic often when cooking and preparing foods.

- To get the most cancer protection, peel and chop the garlic and then allow it to stand for 15-20 minutes before cooking, or use it raw.
- Add garlic to casseroles and other cooked dishes, or include it raw in salad dressings or blended into foods such as hummus.

Choose food rather than supplements as your main source of vitamins, minerals and other cancer-fighting compounds.

- Vitamins and minerals are being studied to see if they might affect your risk of colorectal cancer. Research shows that some supplements may be helpful in one situation but harmful in another. At this time, dietary supplements are not recommended for cancer prevention.
- For more information see "Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Dietary Supplements".
- To learn about the recommended daily intake and safe upper levels for vitamins and minerals, view the Dietary Reference Intake Tables for vitamins and minerals (elements) available from Health Canada at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/reference/table/index-eng.php>
- Speak with your doctor or a registered dietitian about whether vitamin or mineral supplements might help you.



Additional Resources

- Additional handouts:
 - Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Diet and Cancer Prevention Basics. www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfsXAc=&PreviewHandout=bA==
 - Lifestyle Steps to Healthy Weight Loss: Getting Started. www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrXwQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==
 - Lifestyle Steps to Healthy Weight Loss: Taking Action. www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrXwU=&PreviewHandout=bA==
 - Food Sources of Fibre. www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrUQE=&PreviewHandout=bA==
 - Eating Guidelines for Cancer Prevention: Dietary Supplements. www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfsXAE=&PreviewHandout=bA==
- Public Health Agency of Canada, "Canada's Physical Activity Guide" www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/pdf/guideEng.pdf

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