

# Healthy eating to cut your cancer risk



Healthy eating habits are an important step in reducing your cancer risk. A healthy diet can contribute to the maintenance of a healthy body weight which can lower your risk of some cancers. Healthy eating may also help prevent many other chronic conditions including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

## So what is healthy eating?

While there is no one food that can protect against cancer, there are steps you can take to lower your overall risk of cancer.

### 1. Eat at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables per day.

Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables may lower your risk of developing cancers of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach, bowel and lung. Fruit and vegetables contain natural substances, such as antioxidants, that can destroy cancer causing agents. They are low in fat, high in fibre and are excellent foods for helping you maintain a healthy body weight. Aim to eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables a day.

## Tips for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption:

- ✓ Buy fresh fruit and vegetables weekly.
- ✓ Enjoy fruit as a snack or for dessert.
- ✓ Add fruit as a topping on breakfast cereal.
- ✓ Include salad with your lunch.
- ✓ Fill half your dinner plate with vegetables.
- ✓ Include at least three different coloured vegetables with your main meal.
- ✓ Buy frozen, dried or canned fruit and vegetables for convenience.
- ✓ Adapt recipes to include more vegetables.

## What is a serve?

### VEGETABLE



1/2 cup  
cooked veges  
or legumes

=



1 medium  
potato

=



1 cup  
salad veges

### FRUIT



1 medium piece  
(e.g. apple)

=



2 small pieces  
(e.g. apricots)

=



1 cup chopped  
or canned fruit

Fruit and vegetable serves graphic (C) State of Western Australia 2010, reproduced with permission.

## Do I need vitamin or mineral supplements?

For most healthy people, vitamin and mineral supplements are not necessary when they eat well. Getting vitamins and minerals from tablets is not as good as getting them naturally from food, as food provides many other beneficial substances such as fibre and antioxidants.

## What about juice?

Fruit and vegetable juices are a good source of vitamins and minerals; however juice contains only a fraction of the fibre of whole fruit or vegetables, and is high in sugar. Enjoy fruit and vegetables regularly and juice in moderation.

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### 2. Eat a variety of wholegrain, wholemeal and high fibre foods such as cereals, breads, rice and pasta.

Wholegrain foods help to ensure a healthy digestive system and can help lower your risk of bowel cancer. Wholegrain foods contain high levels of fibre, resistant starch and natural protective substances, such as antioxidants.

The amount you need varies depending on your activity level, age and sex. Eat at least four serves of bread and cereal foods daily. An example of a serve is:

- One medium bread roll.
- Two slices of bread.
- One cup of cooked rice, pasta or noodles.
- One cup of porridge or breakfast flakes.
- Half a cup of muesli.

#### Tips for increasing wholegrain consumption

- ✓ Eat wholewheat breakfast cereal, muesli or porridge with reduced fat milk.
- ✓ Make salads with brown rice, wholemeal pasta or tabouli.
- ✓ Make sandwiches or toast with wholemeal or wholegrain bread.

### 3. Eat moderate amounts of lean red meat and limit or avoid processed meats.

A high intake of red meat (particularly processed meats) is associated with an increased risk of bowel cancer. Eat no more than three or four 65-100g serves of lean red meat each week. On other days try alternatives such as:

- 80 -120g of fish
- 65 -100g of skinless chicken
- two small eggs
- 1/3 cup unsalted nuts or legumes (such as lentils and chickpeas).

Limit or avoid eating processed meats such as sausages, bacon, salami and other deli meats.

### 4. Choose foods that are low in salt, sugar and fat, particularly saturated fat.

Diets high in salt have been linked to an increase in stomach cancer and can lead to high blood pressure. Switch to a reduced salt diet and flavour foods with herbs and spices instead. When shopping, read labels on packaged foods and choose products with less sodium (salt). Look for low salt, no added salt, unsalted or salt reduced products.

Limit your intake of foods with a lot of added sugar, such as soft drinks, cordials, lollies, biscuits and cakes.

Select foods that are low in fat, particularly saturated fat, and use healthy fats sparingly. The good fats are polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Some examples of these include olive, canola and sunflower oils; avocado, nuts and seeds; oily fish; and polyunsaturated and monounsaturated margarines. The bad fats are saturated fats which include butter and most prepackaged biscuits and cakes.

### 5. Read the food label

At times we rely on processed and packaged foods. The nutrition information panel shows the amount of fat, saturated fat, sugar and sodium per serving size and per 100g. Serving size may vary between brands, so use the per 100g column to compare products. The table below will help you decide how healthy a product is and assist you to make healthier choices.

| Per 100g      | Healthier<br>Eat more often<br>😊 | OK Eat in<br>moderation<br>😐 | Least healthy<br>Limit intake<br>😞 |
|---------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Total fat     | 3g or less                       | 3g - 20g                     | 20g or more                        |
| Saturated fat | 1.5g or less                     | 1.5g - 5g                    | 5g or more                         |
| Sugar         | 5g or less                       | 5g - 15g                     | 15g or more                        |
| Sodium        | 120mg or less                    | 120mg - 600mg                | 600mg or more                      |

Choose foods with more than 4g of fibre per serve.

#### For further nutrition information

Food for health booklet:  
Dietary Guidelines for Australians:  
A guide to healthy eating  
[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/n31.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/n31.pdf)

#### Helpful websites

[www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)  
[www.gofor2and5.com.au](http://www.gofor2and5.com.au)  
[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)

For further information and support for you and your family visit [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au) or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.

 **Cancer Council  
Helpline**  
13 11 20