



Recommendations for  
preventing cancer

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To your health!

You are the boss of your own body. And that's a good thing, but of course it also brings a certain responsibility with it. Everything that you eat and drink has an influence on the mechanism. The saying 'you are what you eat' is as true as ever today.

To be effective, a boss needs to be a good listener – in this case, to your body – and needs to have access to the right information to take decisions. But the media often sends mixed messages when it comes to food and its influence on the body. Our health charter 'tastes good, good for you' not only guides us in offering a healthy and balanced diet, but also serves to inform our consumers on this subject.

Sodexo informs you through posters about the composition of the meals, and about nutrition, Body Mass Index (BMI) and exercise tips. We also provide a Vitality corner on-site at your company cafeteria: an info stand manned by a dietician who can answer any food related questions. The brochure 'Cancer' is part of a series of handy booklets, each covering a nutrition-related topic. Written in plain language, with figures that speak for themselves, and packed with handy tips and advice that you can put into practice immediately.

The brochure 'Cancer' provides information on the disease but also aims to highlight the preventative approach. The role played by nutrition in preventing cancers is not to be dismissed. For example, antioxidants are a valuable ally in this fight. This brochure will show you which foods are your friends and which may be your foes.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING CANCER.

- 1/ Try to maintain a healthy weight, but avoid being underweight.
- 2/ Do at least half an hour of physical exercise every day.
- 3/ Limit your consumption of foods that are high in calories (especially processed food with a lot of added sugar, low fibre content or high fat content).
- 4/ Opt to eat a lot of vegetables, fruit, wholemeal foods and legumes – and vary them as much as possible.
- 5/ Limit your consumption of red meat and avoid processed meat.
- 6/ If you drink alcohol, limit the number of glasses of alcohol you drink per day to 2 for men and 1 for women.
- 7/ Limit your consumption of salt and meat processed with salt (sodium).
- 8/ Do not rely on dietary supplements to protect you against cancer.
- 9/ Give babies nothing but breast milk for the first 6 months. That is best for both mother and baby. Then supplement breast milk with other liquid and solid foods.
- 10/ If you have had cancer and have completed your treatment, follow up on these recommendations for preventing cancer.
- 11/ And, of course....don't smoke.

Based on the recommendations of the World Cancer Research Fund. This information is aimed at the general public and is not intended as advice for anyone on a diet prescribed by a doctor or who has special needs in terms of diet and exercise. The World Cancer Research Fund does not provide medical advice; speak to your doctor if you need medical advice.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:  
TRY TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT, BUT AVOID BEING UNDERWEIGHT.**

Achieving or maintaining a healthy weight is one of the most important ways of reducing the risk of cancer. So if you can, try to remain on the lower side of a healthy Body Mass Index at all times.



**How do you measure your BMI?**

- a. Take your weight and your height
- b. Divide your weight by the square of your height.  
The result is your BMI.

**Results:**

- Less than 18.5      underweight
- Between 18.5-24.9      healthy weight
- Between 25-29.9      overweight
- 30 or more      obese

**Example:**

- a. I weigh 55 kg and am 1.64 metres tall
- b.  $\frac{55 \text{ kg}}{1.64^2} = \text{BMI of } 20.4 \rightarrow \text{healthy weight}$

**RECOMMENDATION 2:  
DO AT LEAST HALF AN HOUR OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE EVERY DAY.**

Physical exercise, in whatever form, lowers the risk of cancer.  
Try to divide up your daily routine so that you get more exercise. For example, take a brisk walk every day.



**RECOMMENDATION 3:  
LIMIT YOUR CONSUMPTION OF FOODS THAT ARE HIGH IN CALORIES.**

Opt for healthy food instead of food with lots of fat and sugar. That way you will avoid becoming overweight and obese and so reduce your risk of cancer.



**RECOMMENDATION 4:  
OPT TO EAT LOTS OF VEGETABLES, FRUIT, WHOLEMEAL FOODS AND LEGUMES  
– AND VARY THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.**

If we base our diet mainly on plant-based foods that are high in fibre and rich in other nutrients, we can lower our risk of cancer. To enjoy good health, the World Cancer Research Fund recommends that you 'design' your meals around plant-based foods. Make sure that with every meal, your plate is filled at least with 2/3 plant-based foods, such as vegetables, rice, pasta, lentils or cereal products – and wherever possible, always opt for the wholemeal variant.



**RECOMMENDATION 5:  
LIMIT YOUR CONSUMPTION OF RED MEAT AND AVOID PROCESSED MEAT.**

To lower your risk of cancer, you are advised not to eat more than 500 g of red meat a week (weight after cooking). Avoid eating processed meat products such as pies, salami, ham sausage, etc.



**RECOMMENDATION 6:  
IF YOU DRINK ALCOHOL, LIMIT THE NUMBER OF GLASSES OF ALCOHOL YOU  
DRINK PER DAY TO 2 FOR MEN AND 1 FOR WOMEN.**

To prevent cancer, it is best not to drink any alcohol at all. However, the scientific report by the World Cancer Research Fund acknowledges that moderate consumption of alcohol may have a protective effect on coronary heart disease, but the benefits are offset by the disadvantages for people who have a heightened risk of heart disorders.



**RECOMMENDATION 7:  
LIMIT YOUR CONSUMPTION OF SALT AND MEAT PROCESSED WITH SALT  
(SODIUM).**

Too much salt can be harmful to our health. It increases the chance of stomach cancer and may lead to increased blood pressure.

Five steps for limiting your salt intake:

- Eat more fruit and vegetables instead of processed products.
- Cook as often as you can with fresh products or frozen products that have not been prepared beyond their natural state.
- Check the labels on the food you buy and go for products with a lower salt content.
- Gradually lower your use of salt in cooking and at the table until you don't need it any more at all.
- Use herbs, spices, garlic and lemon instead of salt.



**RECOMMENDATION 8:  
DO NOT RELY ON DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS TO PROTECT YOU AGAINST CANCER**

If you want to lower your risk of cancer, you would do better to opt for a varied and balanced diet than to take dietary supplements.

The scientific report of the World Cancer Research Fund reached the conclusion that supplements with a high dose of certain nutrients can have an effect on the risk of various forms of cancer. The panel of scientists was of the opinion that a healthy and varied diet supplies the body with more good nutrients than dietary supplements.

*(See your GP if you would like a personal opinion about taking dietary supplements)*



**RECOMMENDATION 9:  
GIVE BABIES NOTHING BUT BREAST MILK FOR THE FIRST 6 MONTHS. THAT IS  
BEST FOR BOTH MOTHER AND BABY. THEN SUPPLEMENT BREAST MILK WITH  
OTHER LIQUID AND SOLID FOODS.**

You probably know that breast-feeding is excellent for the health of both mother and child. And there is now evidence that breast-feeding helps to lower the risk of cancer for both mother and baby.

The opinions of the World Cancer Research Fund correspond with the guidelines of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF: it is best to give babies nothing but breast milk up to the age of 6 months.



**RECOMMENDATION 10:  
IF YOU HAVE HAD CANCER AND HAVE COMPLETED YOUR TREATMENT, FOLLOW  
UP ON THESE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING CANCER.**

Anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer would do well to seek help about their diet from an expert.

Once you have completed your treatment, try to live as much as possible according to the guidelines set for diet, weight and exercise, unless this is not physically possible for you or if your doctor advises otherwise.



**RECOMMENDATION 11:  
AND, OF COURSE ... DON'T SMOKE**

Tobacco can cause cancer. Smoking is additionally harmful when combined with alcohol. Research shows that passive smoking is also harmful. Smoking causes 90% of cases of lung cancer and also plays a role in cancer of the mouth, throat, larynx, oesophagus, pancreas, cervix, kidneys and bladder.



## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

WHAT DO YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT HEALTHY EATING?

**Read the multiple-choice questions below and circle the answer you think is right.**

1. How many portions of fruit and vegetables should we eat every day to remain fit and healthy?
  - a) One if you're lucky
  - b) Five
  - c) About 3
  
2. Which of the items below contains the most vitamin C per 100 grams?
  - a) Kiwi fruit
  - b) Orange
  - c) Red pepper
  
3. What is the best way of cooking vegetables?
  - a) Boil them until they're soft
  - b) Steaming
  - c) Frying in oil
  
4. A healthy diet contains no fats or oils
  - a) True
  - b) False

5. A healthy, varied diet consists of...
- a) Red or white meat and dairy products
  - b) Vegetables, fruit, cereals, fibre and legumes
  - c) The fats and sugars that are found in things like cake and biscuits
6. In addition to healthy eating it is important to...
- a) Get plenty of exercise
  - b) Make sure you have a healthy body weight
  - c) Not to smoke
  - d) All of the above
7. A varied diet is better than taking dietary supplements
- a) True
  - b) False
8. Diet and lifestyle have an effect on your risk of getting cancer
- a) True
  - b) False

## ANSWERS TO THE TEST

**1b**

We should all try and eat five or more portions of different sorts of fruit and vegetables every day. This will reduce your chance of contracting certain types of cancer and vascular diseases, as well as boost your wellbeing in general.

**2c**

It may sound surprising but red peppers contain the most vitamin C per 100 grams. Kiwi fruit and oranges are also good sources.

**3b**

In general, the best way is to steam vegetables briefly after cleaning them. That way they retain their flavour and nutritional value. Boiling or stir-frying briefly are also good ways of cooking vegetables.

**4b**

False. Our bodies need fat in small quantities. Restrict yourself to unsaturated fats and oils such as olive oil, rapeseed oil and omega 3 fats, which are found in oily fish. Try to restrict your consumption of saturated fats (found in meat, cheese, cake, biscuits and pastries) to a minimum.

**5b**

Our meals need to contain a large proportion of plant-based foods, such as wholemeal bread, rice, pasta, vegetables, fruit and legumes. Not only is this healthy, but plant-based foods ensure that you are less tempted by unhealthy snacks (rich in fats and sugars) between meals. Try to eat seven portions of plant-based foods every day to maintain good health.

**6d**

All of the above! By following the guidelines of the World Cancer Research Fund, you can lower your risk of cancer. And in addition you are also building up good resistance to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and osteoporosis.

**7a**

True. Scientists believe that a varied diet is best for our health. Certain food combinations may have a number of positive effects. There is no evidence that dietary supplements are able to produce the same effects. For that reason, do not replace fruit and vegetables with dietary supplements.

**8a**

True! Diet and lifestyle play a major part in the risk of contracting cancer. By making sensible choices, such as healthy eating, plenty of exercise, maintaining a healthy body weight and not smoking, we should be able to enjoy a longer and healthier life.

## THE POWER OF NUTRITION

### HEALTHY SOURCES OF NUTRITION

Which foods are good for our health? The World Cancer Research Fund has drawn up a list of twenty types of healthy food. These foods strengthen the immune system and help to protect the body against cancer and cardiovascular disease. This is not intended to be a definitive list and the foods are not ranked in any particular order.

### DISCOVER THE HIDDEN BENEFITS

Vegetables, fruit, and other plant-based foods, plus oily fish, are good for our health. The nutrients found in these foods help support many of our body's functions. For example, they have a positive effect on our digestion and immune system. They also strengthen the bones and help reduce the risk of cancer.

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## ANTIOXIDANTS

The term 'antioxidant' is used to indicate a group of vitamins, minerals and certain phytochemicals that are found in food. Phytochemicals are bioactive compounds – in other words substances that have a particular biological (or physiological) activity or function, and which have a 'health-promoting' effect in humans, but are not essential.

Antioxidants help to protect our bodies against the harmful effects of free radicals. Our bodies produce these free radicals of their own accord. Free radicals are also produced if we are exposed to 'toxic' substances, such as tobacco and alcohol. Free radicals can also be created by solar radiation and radioactive material. Scientific research shows that there is a link between these radicals and certain diseases, including cancer. Antioxidants help to protect our bodies against attacks from free radicals. They can restrict and even repair the damage.

Antioxidants include:

- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin K
- Folic acid
- Betacarotene
- Selenium
- Magnesium
- Flavonoids, including quercetin
- Some carotenoids, including lycopene
- Carboic acid
- Allyl sulfide

## NATURAL PROTECTION

Scientific research shows that a predominantly plant-based diet with sufficient variation has the most beneficial effect on our health. Dietary supplements can never achieve the same effect. Some research shows that high dosages of some supplements can even be harmful for our health.

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## RED AND YELLOW PEPPERS

Did you know that half a pepper contains all of your recommended daily intake of vitamin C? Peppers are also rich in the antioxidants betacarotene (vitamin A) and flavonoids. Flavonoids are a large family of plant-based substances. They create the great variation in colour in fruit and vegetables, ranging from yellow and red to deep purple.

## KIWI FRUIT

This little vitamin C power-pack from New Zealand contains more vitamin C per gram than an orange. The kiwi has a full-bodied, sweet flavour and is also brimful of vitamin K, potassium and magnesium.

## BRAZIL NUTS

Brazil nuts are rich in the mineral selenium. This mineral has a protective effect because it helps promote a good immune system and also acts as an antioxidant. This means that Brazil nuts may well reduce the risk of cancer. And if you eat a few Brazil nuts every day, you will also be getting plenty of selenium.

## BROCCOLI

Broccoli is a brassica type of vegetable and contains lots of sulforaphane (a phytochemical substance). Sulforaphane activates enzymes that break down carcinogens. Broccoli also contains folic acid, vitamin C and other antioxidants.

## TOMATOES

The tomato is coloured red by the antioxidant lycopene. Lycopene is a bright red carotenoid (carotenoids encompass a large group of yellow to reddish colours that can be converted into vitamin A or which have an antioxidant action). Scientific research shows that eating lots of tomatoes (particularly cooked, out of a can or in sauces) may lower the risk of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Evidence is strongest of all for prostate cancer. Tomatoes contain a lot of antioxidants: vitamins C and E, flavonoids and also potassium, which helps to regulate blood pressure.

## ONIONS

Onions contain chemical compounds that may reduce the risk of certain types of cancer. Onions are also rich in the flavonoid quercetin (especially red onions). This substance acts as an antioxidant. Onions also contribute to good circulation and blood pressure.

## SWEET POTATOES

Put sweet potatoes on the menu from time to time instead of ordinary potatoes. They are a rich source of nutrients and are full of carotenoids such as alpha-carotene and betacarotene and vitamin E. The body is better able to take up the carotenoids by cooking the potatoes. So eat sweet potatoes boiled or mashed, or in a casserole or soup.

## CARROTS

No other type of vegetable is as rich in the antioxidant betacarotene as the humble carrot. Our bodies are able to convert betacarotene into vitamin A and it also helps provide healthy skin, a strong immune system and good night vision. So it's true what they say about carrots: they are really good for the eyes!

## MANGOES

The exotic mango is bursting with vitamin C. To a lesser extent, mangoes also contain vitamin E and carotenoids (which is why the flesh is orange in colour). Enjoy mangoes in fruit salads, smoothies, sorbets, fruit juices or sauces.

## STRAWBERRIES

These juicy, sweet summer gems earn a special place on this list. Their protective action comes from their high concentration in vitamin C and flavonoids. The strawberry's secret weapon is the phytochemical substance ellagic acid, which scientific research has shown to slow down the growth of cancer cells.

## WATERCRESS

Scientists say that watercress has a naturally healing action. It is also a vegetable that is full of vitamins C, E, B and minerals, such as iron and calcium. Watercress also has flavonoids, betacarotene and glucosinolates (toxic substances that occur naturally in food), which scientists suspect may protect us against cancer.

## SUNFLOWER SEEDS

No other seed contains such good nutrients as the sunflower seed (particularly vitamin E). Mix sunflower seeds with pumpkin seeds for a healthy blend of plant omega 6 and omega 3 fatty acids (essential fatty acids). Eat the seeds with your breakfast, or enjoy them as a snack.

## SALMON

Like all oily fishes, salmon is rich in omega 3 fatty acids. By strengthening the immune system, these fatty acids appear to help prevent cancer as well as ensure that the heart is working properly. Salmon also contains selenium. Try to put oily fish on the menu twice a week. You can also go for herring, mackerel, trout or sardines.

## BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Whether you like them or not, sprouts are very health. Nine sprouts will give you a generous portion of vitamin C and folic acid. The distinctive aroma of sprouts is caused by the phytochemical sinigrin.

## VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Virgin olive oil (especially extra virgin) is rich in the antioxidant carabolic acid. This is the substance that gives olive oil its greeny-gold colour. Other healthy benefits of olive oil include vitamin E and mono-unsaturated fats. But use olive oil in moderation, because it contains lots of calories.

## CABBAGE

Cabbage is a member of the brassica family and a good source of nutrients. For example, it contains vitamin C and folic acid. Scientific research shows that eating brassicas can lower the risk of cancer. This applies in particular to the types of cancer that occur in the digestive system, such as stomach and bowel cancer. You can add cabbage raw to salads or boil, steam and braise it briefly.

## WHOLEMEAL BREAD

Opt for wholemeal bread instead of white bread. Wholemeal bread is full of fibre, which makes sure that your bowels work properly. It also contains various phytochemical substances, vitamin B for energy and important minerals. Non-refined natural foods such as brown rice, wholemeal bread and cereals may lower the risk of bowel cancer.

## GARLIC

Did you know that garlic has been used as a medicine for centuries? Scientific research shows that garlic plays a role in reducing the risk of cancer. Garlic contains the phytochemical substance allyl sulfide, which acts as an antioxidant and also has a protective effect.

## ORANGES

Everyone knows that oranges contain vitamin C. But that's not only what they are good for. Oranges are also rich in fibre and folic acid. Another important benefit of this citrus fruit is that you can make juice from it. A glass of orange juice counts as one portion of your recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables.

## SPINACH

This was Popeye's favourite food and he knew what he was doing, because spinach is brimful of folic acid. Folic acid promotes healthy circulation and a good nervous system and is important during pregnancy. Spinach also contains vitamin C. Green leaf vegetables (such as spinach, green cabbage and various spring vegetables) are rich in carotenoids. These phytochemicals can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, as well as certain types of cancer.



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