

## The Anti-Cancer Diet

It used to be thought that cancer was an unpredictable disease - if your "number came up" it was unavoidable. But we are now learning that, in a majority of cases, cancer may be a "man-made" disease.

### Causes of Cancer

Scientists are discovering that many kinds of cancer can be prevented. Cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, environmental pollution, diet, and other lifestyle factors are major causes of cancer. Estimates reveal that over 60 percent of all cancers in women and over 40 percent in men are diet-related. Nutritionally related cancers include cancer of the breast, prostate, colon, stomach, pancreas, and liver.

Dietary factors suspected of contribution to cancer are toxins from molds, alcohol, broiled or fried foods (especially animal products), nitrites, low intake of vitamins A and C, high fat and low fiber consumption, and possible caffeine.

### Cancer-causing Agent

A number of cancer-causing agents have been identified in moldy foods - peanuts, corn, cottonseed, and moldy cheese rind. Smoked and charcoal broiled foods contain a carcinogen called benzopyrene. This compound is formed especially when fatty meat is cooked at a very high temperature. It has been reported that one kilogram of charcoal-broiled steak has as much benzopyrene as is found in the smoke of 600 cigarettes!

Methyl-cholanthrene, another cancer-producing chemical, is formed in the fat of meat when it is broiled, fried, or roasted. It is thought to be a possible major contributing factor in cancer of the bowel. Interestingly, methyl-cholanthrene is not formed when vegetable oils are overheated.

Sodium nitrite, a food additive used to preserve the red color of meat, produces a cancer-forming chemical called nitrosamine. Vitamin C inhibits the formation of the chemical nitrosamine, consequently including fresh fruit (especially citrus fruit) and vegetables in the diet can be beneficial.

### Protective Foods

Some foods actually protect against cancer. Members of the brassica family, which include cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts, and cauliflower, contain an enzyme which destroys the carcinogen benzopyrene. Beta-carotene (the yellow-orange pigment in many fruit and vegetables) protects from certain cancers. Studies in Japan and Norway have found that the more dark-green leafy or yellow-orange vegetables eaten, the lower the risk of lung cancer.

In a New York study, persons eating vegetables less than 20 times per month had more than twice the risk of developing colon cancer than those who ate vegetables more than 60 times per month. The study also showed that persons eating cabbage less than once a month have a risk of colon cancer three times that of persons eating cabbage at least once a week.

### Warnings and Suggestions

An American Research Committee on Diet and Cancer suggested these important guidelines:

1. Eat less fat (below 30 percent of total calories).
2. Eat more fruit (especially citrus), vegetables (especially yellow-orange and cabbage family), and whole grain products.
3. Eat very little salt-cured, pickled, or smoked foods.
4. Avoid moldy, contaminated foods.
5. Avoid alcohol since it is associated with increased risk of cancer of the liver, mouth, esophagus, pharynx, and larynx.

In summary, we should eat less fat, less meat, and more fiber-rich cereals, fruits, and vegetables to reduce the risk of cancer.

### About the Author

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