

Department of
Nutrition & Dietetics

Healthy Eating and Cancer



Importance of Having a Healthy Balanced Diet

The following guidance are for:

1. Cancer patients who have completed treatment and are not struggling with weight loss or poor appetite
2. Cancer patients experiencing unwanted weight gain during and after treatment
3. Cancer survivors who are looking for healthy eating tips to reduce risk of cancer recurrence

*For those on active cancer treatment and are experiencing poor appetite/struggling with weight loss, please refer to QR code/web link for relevant resources at the back of the pamphlet *

Importance of Having a Healthy Balanced Diet

A healthy balanced diet is a diet which includes carbohydrates, lean meat and alternatives and fruits and vegetables. It should look something like the healthy plate below in the form of a meal.



Figure 1: My Healthy Plate

It helps to maintain and/or achieve a healthy body weight. This is important as it reduces the risks of developing many cancers. Research has shown that being overweight or obese increases the risk of developing numerous cancers such as cancer of the oesophagus, pancreas, colon, rectum, breast (postmenopausal), ovary, prostate, etc.

Healthy Body Weight

What Is Considered a “Healthy Body Weight”?

Having a healthy body weight is when your weight is within the healthy BMI (Body Mass Index) range.

You can calculate your BMI using the formula below:

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$$

Category	BMI (kg/m ²) (For Adults)
Underweight	Less than 18.5
Healthy Range	18.5 – 24.9
Overweight	25.0 – 29.9
Obese	More than 30.0

Dietary Tips for Cancer Prevention/ Reducing Risk of Cancer Recurrence

A. Have adequate fruits and vegetables

- Fruits and vegetables of different colours contain phytochemicals and antioxidants that help to reduce the risk of many cancers
- Aim for **2 servings of fruits** (1 serving = a medium-sized banana/apple OR a wedge of watermelon/pineapple) and **2 servings of vegetables** (1 serving = $\frac{3}{4}$ mug of cooked vegetables OR 100g of raw non-leafy vegetables OR 150g of raw leafy vegetables) **daily**

B. Limit fats and sugar

- Excessive intake of fats and sugars can lead to undesirable weight gain which increases the risk of cancer
- Choose water over sweetened drinks, limit cakes and confectionery, remove visible fats and skin from meats and reduce deep-fried foods

C. Avoid processed meat and reduce intake of red meat

- Processed meat (e.g. bacon, ham and salted/preserved meat) and excessive red meat (e.g. beef, pork and mutton) have been linked to increased risk of bowel cancers
- Avoid processed meat whenever possible and limit red meat to 500g (cooked weight) per week (*90g portion size: ~1 palm size). Instead, choose lean poultry, eggs, soy products and legumes

Dietary Tips for Cancer Prevention/ Reducing Risk of Cancer Recurrence

D. Reduce salt intake

- Excessive salt intake has been shown to damage the lining of the stomach which increases the risk of stomach cancers
- Limit salt intake by consuming less processed foods and reduce intake of commercial soups and sauces

E. Avoid alcohol intake

- Alcohol increases the risk of mouth, larynx, pharynx, oesophagus, breast and colorectal cancers.
- If you must drink, do so in moderation. Limit to 1 drink for women and 2 drinks for men a day.



Examples of one standard drink

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Contact:
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