

## Nutrition

In 2024, cancer was expected to claim an estimated 611,720 lives in the United States. About 42% of those deaths could be prevented through maintaining a healthy weight, healthy nutrition and physical activity levels, not smoking, and minimizing or avoiding alcohol. Adopting a healthy lifestyle that includes a well-balanced diet full of fiber and nutrients that lower the risk of disease is important for overall well-being and is critical to reducing risk of cancer. Eating more of certain types of foods, such as fruits and vegetables, is associated with a lower cancer risk. Since studies have shown that obesity increases cancer risk, maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce cancer risk. American Cancer Society research found that, in the United States, approximately 11% of cancers in women, 5% of cancers in men, and 7% of all cancer deaths are attributable to excess body weight.

### The following nutritional guidelines are recommended:

- Select a diet rich in plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, including:
  - Dark, leafy greens and a colorful variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables, including berries – all of which are rich in antioxidants.
  - Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and brussels sprouts, which studies have shown reduce cancer risk.
- Aim to eat a variety of at least 2.5-3 cups of vegetables and 1.5-2 cups of fruits per day, depending on a person's calorie requirements.
- Limit intake of creamy dressings, sauces, and dips.
- Reduce intake of foods high in salt and fat.
- Limit consumption of red meat, such as beef, pork, and lamb, and processed meats, such as lunch meat, bacon, sausage, and hot dogs. Choose fish, poultry, or beans instead.
- Limit sugary drinks, including soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit-flavored drinks, and energy-dense drinks unless one is specifically trying to build muscle or gain weight as directed by a nutritionist or coach.
- Opt for whole grains instead of processed or refined grains.
- Avoid large portions of high-calorie foods.
- Avoid or limit alcohol consumption. Women should have no more than one drink per day; men no more than two drinks per day.

### Nutrition for Patients Fighting Cancer

Ensuring proper nutrition during cancer treatment is important to recovery. Some patients find maintaining good nutrition a challenge due to the side effects of some treatment regimens, such as loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing. Treatment can also affect how foods are tolerated and the body's absorption of nutrients. A healthy diet is an essential building block for allowing the body to repair itself and lower the risk of infection. Thus, what one eats before, during, and after treatment is very important for maintaining strength. Proper nutrition for a patient undergoing treatment may be quite different than a normal diet, and it can vary depending on the patient's specific type of cancer and treatment and the side effects they experience.

### The following are recommendations for patients undergoing cancer treatment:

- Eating plenty of proteins helps the body repair tissue and maintain strength.
- "Good fats" like those found in vegetable oils and seafood can help the body protect tissue and carry vitamins through the bloodstream.
- Nutrient-rich carbohydrates, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, supply energy and promote organ health, as well as fiber to support digestion.
- Consuming plenty of water keeps the body hydrated and is essential for proper cell function.
- When considering vitamins, it's important to consult with a physician before taking high dose supplements or herbal remedies.

Decisions on nutrition and supplements should be made in careful consultation with the treating physician, nurse, and/or a registered dietician.

### About Texas Oncology

With more than 550 physicians and 300 locations, Texas Oncology is an independent private practice, a member of The US Oncology Network, that sees more than 71,000 new cancer patients each year. Founded in 1986, Texas Oncology provides comprehensive, multidisciplinary care, and includes Texas Breast Specialists, Texas Center for Proton Therapy, Texas Colon & Rectal Specialists, Texas Imaging & Infusion Center, Texas Oncology Surgical Specialists and Texas Urology Specialists. Texas Oncology's robust community-based clinical trials and research program has contributed to the development of more than 100 FDA-approved cancer therapies. Learn more at [TexasOncology.com](https://TexasOncology.com).

*Sources: American Cancer Society, American Institute for Cancer Research, and National Cancer Institute.*



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