

Foods to Reduce Risk for Prostate Cancer

Diet and lifestyle does not cause prostate cancer, but it can increase risk. It can also impact the growth rate of it and possibly even the extent to which it can spread.

Here are suggestions for using food to stay healthy and to help your recovery if you have cancer. Most of the suggestions for prostate health will also give you a protective edge for breast health, other cancers, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and the list keeps growing. . . all good reasons to be conscious about your lifestyle choices.

Cooked tomatoes: Eating tomato sauce at least twice a week lowered the risk of prostate cancer by 33 percent in one study of 47,000 men (*Journal of the National Cancer Institute, March 6, 2002*). Lycopene, a pigment found in tomatoes, is more readily available from cooked tomatoes than raw. It needs fat to be absorbed, so include some olive oil! Lycopene from cooked tomatoes is more effective than lycopene in supplement form.

Cruciferous vegetables: Men who eat at least five servings a week of cruciferous veggies are 10-20 percent less likely to develop prostate cancer. Choices include broccoli, kale, brussels spouts, cabbage, collards, cauliflower and bok choy.

Soy Foods: Soy contains isoflavones that are thought to interfere with the life cycle of cancer cells. One theory is that phytoestrogens attach to estrogen receptors but activate them only weakly. There are still questions about the effects of soy because of unclear results in human studies, but most sources suggest regularly using some whole soy foods like tofu, tempeh, soy milk, edamame and soy nuts. Soy supplements, including soy protein powder, may not offer the same benefits.

Oily Fish: EPA and DHA, the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, may cut cancer risk by inhibiting inflammation. Eat oily fish such as wild salmon, sardines, herring or black cod at least twice a week, or take a fish-oil supplement at a dose of 1-2 grams per day.

Flaxseed: These seeds are rich source of lignans, which are phytoestrogens, and are thought to protect against hormone-driven cancers such as prostate, breast and ovarian. They are also a good source of omega-3s and fiber. A common recommendation is 2 tablespoons a day of freshly ground flaxseed. If possible, grind your own in a spice grinder. Refrigerated, it keeps about a week. Flaxseed oil doesn't have fiber and goes rancid quickly. Ground flaxseeds can be sprinkled on salads, cereal and vegetables.

Chili peppers: Capsaicin, the compound in chili peppers that gives them their heat, may kill prostate cancer cells (although the research is preliminary). If you enjoy it, spice up your meals with hot chilies.

Green tea: This beverage is high in antioxidant compounds called polyphenols that may be protective against a range of cancers. In a clinical trial, men with precancerous prostate cells who had the equivalent of 15 cups of tea a day were less likely to develop prostate cancer. Dr Andrew Weil recommends 2- 4 cups a day of green tea. I find the impact of smaller quantities unclear, but if you like it, it can't hurt and it could help. It is a pleasant way to get more fluids in. Just make sure you're not getting a lot of sugar along with it.

Red Wine: In a study of 1,456 middle-aged men, those who drank four or more 4-oz glasses of red wine a week had a 48 percent lower risk of prostate cancer than non-drinkers (*International Journal of Cancer, Jan 1, 2005*). The wine's protective effect could come from resveratrol, found in the skins of red grapes. If you don't drink, don't start. If you do drink, favor red wine and limit your intake to a glass or two a day (for men, one glass a day for women). A little wine seems to have health benefits, but more can have a harmful effect and adds extra calories. Even moderate wine intake could be linked with risk for breast cancer.

Pomegranate Juice: A recent study indicates drinking 1-2 cups of pomegranate juice daily could slow the progression of prostate cancer. Pomegranates are very high in polyphenols and contain the isoflavones found in soy and the ellagic acid found in berries. If you are at high risk, a glass of pomegranate juice is worth considering.

Reduce animal fats: Animal fats, especially from red meats and high-fat dairy, can stimulate prostate cancer to grow. Grilling meats causes a substance called PhIP which has been linked to the development of prostate cancer in laboratory animals. Reduce the impact of grilling by lowering the grill temperature, minimizing char on the meat, and using marinades.

Vitamins and Minerals: Research is a little mixed. Vitamins D, E and Selenium show some promise with prostate cancer. If you take supplements, aim for 1,000 IU of Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol), 400 IU of Vit E (natural mixed tocopherols or 80 mg of mixed tocopherols and tocotrienols), and 200 mcg of Selenium. High levels of Zinc and Calcium have the potential of adverse effects, but can be protective against other diseases. Discuss with your physician or avoid high levels of these minerals.

Exercise and Weight Control: Exercise plays a role in prostate health, especially in older men. Exercise reduces inflammation by improving insulin resistance. Regular exercise can make a difference at any age – the general recommendation is at least 30 minutes a day on most days.

Exercise also helps with weight control. Excess weight has a negative effect on disease outcomes. PSA test results in obese men can be lower despite the presence of disease, leading to a delay in diagnosis and treatment. It can also impact recovery from surgery.

Resources:

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www.prostatecancerfoundation.org

www.prostatehealth.com

2/07 Kathy Nichols RD, CPCC

Dietitian, Life Coach

www.kathynichols.net