

Healthy Living after Cancer Treatment

This handout offers information on healthy living after finishing cancer treatments. Research shows healthy living can help reduce the risk of your cancer coming back or getting new cancer. This includes:

- Eating well
- Being physically active
- Working towards or keeping your best weight

You cannot change other risk factors such as age, gender, or family history.

Eating well

Eating well is an important part of healthy living. Eating more of some foods and less of others can reduce your risk of certain cancers.

1. Eat mostly plant-based foods

Plant foods have vitamins, minerals, fibre, antioxidants, and phytonutrients (phyto = plant) and may lower your risk of cancer. Plant-based foods include:

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Whole-grains
- Legumes (beans)
- Nuts and seeds

2. Use the plate from Canada's Food Guide as a guide to include vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and protein in your meals

- Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with vegetables and fruits.
- Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with whole grains. Examples of whole grains are oats, barley, whole wheat, quinoa, and rice (brown, red, purple, or black).
- Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with protein foods. Examples of protein foods are fish, poultry, meat, tofu, legumes (soybeans, beans, lentils, and chickpeas), eggs, and dairy products.

You can find a copy of Canada's Food Guide at food-guide.canada.ca.

3. Eat a rainbow of vegetables and fruits

Brightly coloured vegetables and fruits are high in phytonutrients. Eat a variety of red, green, yellow, white, purple, and orange vegetables and fruits.

4. Eat less red and processed meats

Eating high amounts of red meat or processed meat can increase your risk of certain cancers.

- Limit your intake of cooked red meat to 500 grams (about 2 ¼ cups or 18 ounces) each week. Red meat includes beef, veal, pork, and lamb.
- Eat less processed meats or eat them on special occasions only. Processed meat includes ham, bacon, deli meat, hot dogs, and sausages.

5. Eat less foods and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar

Too many calories can lead to weight gain. A high body weight may increase your risk for cancer.

- Sugar-sweetened beverages are high in sugar and calories and can cause weight gain. This includes pop, iced tea, fruit cocktails, sports and energy drinks, vitamin-enhanced waters, milkshakes, sweetened coconut water, iced cappuccino, and flavoured coffee/tea beverages.
- Eat less fats from baked goods, convenience foods, meats, and butter. Unsaturated fats are important to keep your heart healthy. These fats are found in vegetable oils, avocados, peanuts, nuts, salmon, trout, and mackerel.
- Too much salt may be a risk factor for cancer. Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods such as baked goods, convenience foods, processed meats, and salty snacks.

You can find a Nutrition Facts Table on the Health Canada website at canada.ca/en/services/health/food-labels.

6. Limit or drink less alcohol

All alcoholic drinks can increase your risk of certain cancers. Alcoholic drinks are also high in calories but low in nutrients your body needs.

If you drink alcohol, limit this to:

- One drink a day for women
- Two drinks a day for men

One drink is equal to:

- 341 ml (12 ounce) bottle of 5% beer, cider or cooler
- 142 ml (5 ounce) glass of 12% wine
- 43 ml (1 ½ ounce) shot of 40% spirits

7. Don't rely on supplements

Dietary supplements include vitamins, minerals, and natural health products. There is little research to support taking supplements to prevent cancer. In some cases, supplements can be harmful.

Most people get enough nutrients from eating a variety of foods. Some people may benefit from a vitamin or mineral supplement. Talk to a member of your healthcare team if you are taking a dietary supplement or plan to start one.

Ask to talk to a registered dietitian at the Durham Regional Cancer Centre if side effects from cancer treatment or other health problems prevent you from eating well.

Physical activity

Low levels of physical activity may increase your risk of some cancers. People of all body weights can benefit from physical activity. Physical activity has many health benefits, even without weight loss.

Be physically active for at least 20 to 30 minutes each day if possible. You can do this by completing 10 minutes of activity at a time. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines from the Canadian Society of Exercise Professionals is available at csepguidelines.ca.

Working towards or keeping your best body weight

Having a high or low body weight can increase your risk of health problems. A high body weight can increase your risk of some cancers. Working towards or keeping your best body weight can improve your overall health and well-being. This can also reduce your risk of cancer.

What you can do to work towards or keep your best body weight:

1. Make small changes

You can improve your health with even small changes to your eating and physical activity habits. The next section, “Setting Your Goals”, offers information on making small changes.

2. Include different types of physical activity

Some physical activities increase your heart rate (aerobic activity) and others make your muscles stronger (resistance activity). Including different types of physical activities can help improve your overall fitness and preserve your muscle strength.

3. Be aware of your eating habits

Take your time eating. Eat in a quiet place. This can help you be aware of when you feel hungry and when you feel full. Keeping track of what, where, and when you eat and drink in a journal (paper or electronic) can help you make changes to your eating habits.

4. Be aware of portion sizes

It can be difficult to know how big or small a serving size should be. This can cause you to eat too much of some foods and not enough of others. It may be helpful to use tools to measure your portions such as measuring cups or your hand.

You can find a handout called “Unlock Food’s Handy Guide to Serving Sizes” from Dietitians of Canada at unlockfood.ca. This website offers more information from dietitians on food, nutrition, healthy eating, disease prevention, recipes, and more.

5. Prepare your own meals

Prepare your meals at home more often. This allows you to eat less processed foods. Include a variety of ingredients and use healthy cooking methods.

6. Eat all foods in moderation

Enjoying the foods you eat is an important part of eating well. Eat foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt in smaller amounts and less often.

7. Do not follow fad diets

Eating a diet too low in calories or not eating from important food groups can be harmful to your health. This may prevent you from getting nutrients and calories your body needs. You can also lose weight too quickly. These diets can be difficult to follow for a long time.

Setting your goals

Changing habits can be hard. It can help to make “SMART” goals.

SMART goals are:

- **Specific.** There is a specific action or result of an action.
- **Measurable.** There is a way to know the goal is accomplished.
- **Achievable.** The goal is something you can do.
- **Realistic.** The goal fits into your routine.
- **Time-framed.** There is a start date or other target dates.

Examples of SMART goals are listed below. You can use these as your goals. You can also make your own goals.

1. I will increase my fibre intake by eating brown rice instead of white rice once this week.
2. I will make my lunch at home 3 days this week.
3. I will drink water instead of pop at dinner every day this week.
4. I will use a new recipe with a leafy green vegetable this week.
5. I will make a meatless meal this Monday.
6. I will snack on fruit and nuts instead of potato chips on weekends.
7. I will walk quickly for 10 minutes 5 times this week.
8. I will replace 30 minutes of television time with 30 minutes of physical activity 2 times this week.
9. I will go for a hike every Sunday.

For more information and support

Below is a list of websites, cookbooks and smartphone apps you may find helpful.

This list is for your information only. The Durham Regional Cancer Centre/Lakeridge Health does not represent or support any organization or individual on this list.

Websites

| Website | What this website offers |
|---|--|
| American Institute for Cancer Research Website: aicr.org/cancer-prevention/healthy-eating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on healthy eating and lifestyle for cancer prevention • Recipes • Articles on nutrition topics related to cancer |
| Canada's Food Guide by Government of Canada Website: food-guide.canada.ca | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations for healthy eating habits and food choices • Information on how to use food labels to compare and choose products • Guidelines in multiple languages |
| Unlock Food by Dietitians of Canada Website: unlockfood.ca | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on nutrition and health topics (examples: weight, digestion, diabetes, heart health, children, seniors, families) • Meal planning tools • Recipes • Information on understanding food portions at home and when eating out |
| Cookspiration by Dietitians of Canada Website: cookspiration.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly menu planning tool with recipes and shopping list |
| Real Good Eats Website: realgoodeats.ca | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipes include allergen friendly, sheet pan, one-pot and under 30 minute recipes |
| Food & Nutrition Magazine by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Website: foodandnutrition.org | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipes • Articles on nutrition and food trends • Reviews of kitchen tools |
| Dietetic Directions Website: dieteticdirections.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipes • Blog posts • Dietitian counselling services for a fee |
| The First Mess Website: thefirstmess.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant-based, vegan and gluten-free recipes |
| Jessica Levinson Website: jessicalevinson.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipes developed by a dietitian • Menu planning ideas |
| Nutrition con Sabor Website: nutritionconsabor.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipes • Blog post • Latin American cuisine |
| Food Heaven Website: foodheavenmadeeasy.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant-based recipes • Podcast and YouTube channel • Meal planning program for a fee |

Cookbooks

| Cookbook | Description |
|--|---|
| Mindful Glow Cookbook by Abby Sharp | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written by a dietitian • 2009 Taste Canada Award winner (2019) • Healthy balanced recipes |
| Mediterranean Instant Pot Bible by America's Test Kitchen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediterranean-based recipes using the Instant Pot • Most recipes ready in less than an hour |
| Love and Lemons Everyday by Jeanine Donofrio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy, seasonal vegetarian recipes |
| The First Mess by Laura Wright | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant-based recipes |
| Oh She Glows Everyday by Angela Liddon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegan, plant-based, mainly gluten-free recipes |
| Eat a Little Better: Great Flavor, Good Health, Better World by Sam Kass | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written by a former chef • Healthy balanced meals |
| The Complete Plate: 120 Recipes, 30 Meal Plans, a Stronger, Healthier and Happier You by Lauren Klukas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy, healthy recipes • Includes meal plans |
| Yum and Yummer by Greta Podlesky | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy recipes, featuring comfort foods with a healthy twist |
| Whole in One: Complete Healthy Meals in a Single Pot, Sheet Pan or Skillet by Ellie Krieger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutritious recipes easy to prepare, quick, and easy to find ingredients |

Smartphone Apps

| App | Description |
|----------------|---|
| Cookspiration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu planning with recipes and grocery lists • Recipes with nutritional information |
| Down Dog | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga exercises with instruction video and voiceover • Customizable sequence, length and difficulty level |
| Down Dog HIIT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodyweight exercises with instruction video and voiceover • High intensity training |
| Cronometer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input foods and drinks to calculate daily calories, protein, carbohydrates, fats, fibre, vitamins and minerals • Databases for nutrient information, including commercial foods and restaurants • Can create custom foods and scan barcodes |
| Foodility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food journal to track meals, drinks, medications, exercise and other notes • Option to add photos of meals/snacks • Does not count calories or other nutrition information |
| Ate Food Diary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo diary of meals with option to type additional notes • Does not count calories or other nutrition information |

Nutrition resources in your community

You may find it helpful to talk to a registered dietitian. See the list of organizations offering appointments with a registered dietitian below. There is a fee for some of these appointments.

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| Name and contact information | Description |
|--|---|
| Central East Home and Community Care Support Services Phone number: 905-430-3308 | If you are eligible, OHIP pays for this. |
| Registered Dietitians in private practice Website: dietitians.ca/find | You do not need a doctor's referral. There is a fee for appointments. Your private insurance may cover this fee with a doctor's referral. |
| Community Advantage Rehabilitation Phone number: 905-666-2540 Website: car-rehab.com | You do not need a doctor's referral. There is a fee for appointments. Your private insurance may cover this fee with doctor's referral. |
| Lakeridge Health Ajax Pickering – Outpatient Registered Dietitian Counseling Phone number: 905-683-2320 Extension: 15506 | You need a doctor's referral. OHIP pays for this appointment. |
| Diabetes Education Programs Website: healthcareathome.ca/centraleast – search for 'diabetes' Phone number: 1-888-997-9996 | You need a doctor's referral. |
| Carea Community Health Centre Phone numbers: 905-723-0036 (Oshawa) 905-428-1212 (Ajax) 905-420-0333 (Pickering) | You do not need a doctor's referral for nutritional counselling. OHIP pays for this appointment. OHIP does not pay for weight loss counseling unless you need this support to manage diabetes or heart disease. |
| Loblaws, Real Canadian Superstore, and Shopper's Drug Mart Websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loblaws.ca/dietitians • realcanadiansuperstore.ca (under services) • shoppersdrugmart.ca – search dietitians Call your local store. | Loblaws and Real Canadian Superstore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many stores offer free grocery store tours provided by registered dietitians. • Counselling with a registered dietitian for a fee. Shoppers Drug Mart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counselling with a registered dietitian for a fee (first 15 minutes are free). |
| Telehealth Ontario Phone number: 1-866-797-0000 | Talk to a registered dietitian for free to receive general nutrition and healthy eating information. |
| Well.ca/services | You can have a free 15-minute telephone or video appointment with a dietitian. |

Ask to talk to a registered dietitian at the Durham Regional Cancer Centre if you have any questions about the information in this handout.

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