

EAT WELL
AFTER
TREATMENT

A guide for
people with
colorectal
cancer

Nourish

E X T R A

CANADA'S NUTRITION COMPANION
FOR ONCOLOGY PATIENTS
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Nourish Extra: EAT WELL AFTER TREATMENT
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Many cancer treatments make you change how you eat or how you feel about eating. This typically improves once cancer treatment is finished and most side effects are under control. While there currently isn't any research to back many of today's popular diets, evidence does suggest that eating healthy and balanced meals can help reduce your risk of cancer recurrence.

In this guide, written by registered dietitians, we look at balanced meals and at the risk factors for colorectal cancer which are backed by evidence.^{1,2} The following recommendations will help you on your path to a healthier you. Give your body time to recover and try to follow this advice at your own pace.

Some risk factors for colorectal cancer are out of our control, such as age, genetic make-up, family history and medical conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease. Fortunately, many are within our control. By making lifestyle changes, choosing the right foods, reducing consumption of potentially harmful foods, and by being active, we can reduce our risk of colorectal cancer returning.

WHAT RISK FACTORS CAN I CONTROL?

Where do I start?

1 STOP SMOKING

Quitting can be very difficult, especially for long term smokers, so asking for help is important. Speak to your doctor about treatment options that may help make quitting easier. There is also support online, such as the Canadian Cancer Society's helpline.

2 LIMIT ALCOHOL

Avoid alcohol if possible. More than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women increase cancer risk. One drink equals 1.5oz of spirits, a 12oz beer, or 5oz of wine. Aside from being a risk factor in many cancers, too much alcohol can also add extra calories to your diet, which can increase body weight.

3 GET ACTIVE

Exercise at a moderate or vigorous level for 150 minutes weekly. Try no less than 10 minute intervals of brisk walking, biking, jogging or fitness classes.³ Finding activities that you enjoy and can easily fit into your schedule make it easier to include them regularly. Look for an exercise partner for motivation.

4 REDUCE RISK FACTORS IN YOUR DIET

Be aware of the risk factors (**TABLE 1**) in your diet and try to reduce them when you can. Slowly replacing food items with healthier choices helps in reducing risk factors. Take one step at a time. Here are the long-term goals:

Reduce the amount of red meat to no more than three 3-oz servings per week.

- Eat more plant-based foods.
- Avoid processed meats.
- Avoid foods and drinks high in sugar.

The new **Canada's Food Guide**⁴ is a tool for making better food choices and planning healthy meals and snacks. The advice in this pamphlet will help you take steps towards reaching these long-term goals. You will understand which foods we need to eat more of and which ones should be eaten in smaller quantities or not at all.

TABLE 1: LIFESTYLE AND DIETARY RISK FACTORS FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

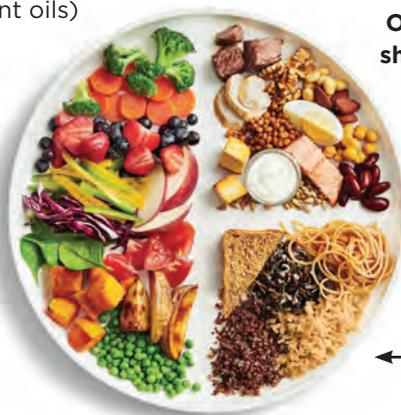
Smoking	Eating processed meat
Drinking alcohol excessively	Not eating enough fibre
Lack of physical activity	Consuming high sugar foods and drinks
Eating too much red meat	Being overweight

HERE ARE SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I achieve a balanced meal?

- Eat a variety of foods at each meal
- Choose whole grains more often
- Include small amounts of healthy fats (e.g. olive oil or other plant oils)
- Cut down on less healthy fats (e.g. butter, lard, skin and visible fat on meat and poultry)

Fill half of your plate with vegetables and fruits



One quarter of the plate should include a protein, choosing plant-based proteins such as beans and lentils more often

One quarter of the plate should be whole grain foods

How do I make plant-based protein more interesting?

- As a first step, try to include plant-based protein such as beans or tofu in soups, stews and sautés
- Try out some recipes (check websites under *resources*) that include beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Replace ground meat in stew recipes with canned lentils
- Use hummus (made with chickpeas) as a sandwich spread or as the base for a vegetable dip

How do I reduce processed meat and other processed foods when I'm too busy to cook?

- Choose left over fresh meats, hard-boiled eggs, hummus, nut butters, or canned fish such as tuna or salmon
- Add toppings to your sandwiches, such as roasted red peppers, lettuce, cucumber, radish and tomatoes
- Cook larger amounts of food and freeze in portions
- Have healthy snacks handy: cut up fruits, try nuts and seeds, baby carrots

How do I get more fibre?

- Eat vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes
- Add nuts, seeds (e.g. flax, chia), dried shredded coconut, dried fruit to yogurt or cereal
- Check the nutrition label for foods that offer a minimum of 4 grams of fibre per serving

How do I get more fruits and vegetables in my diet?

- Include fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit with all meals
- Choose fruits and vegetables of many colours as they have different cancer fighting nutrients
- Steam, grill, stir fry, or add a side salad or soup to your meals and snack on fruit and vegetables daily
- Cut fruit and prepare vegetables and keep in the fridge for quick snacks and meal preparation

How do I choose whole grains?

- When choosing grain products it is important to check the ingredient list. It should contain the words "whole grain" followed by the type of grain. For example: whole grain rice, whole grain wheat
- Try recipes that include wild rice, quinoa and barley
- Choose whole grain breads, pasta, rice and crackers without a lot of added flavours, colours or preservatives
- Try bran cereal, multi grain cereals, steel cut oatmeal, cream of wheat, shredded wheat

HERE ARE SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I still have milk?

Yes. In fact, low calcium and vitamin D intake is a risk factor for colorectal cancer. Consuming milk, milk products, and fortified milk alternatives (e.g. soy beverage) may protect against colorectal cancer as they are good sources of these nutrients. Milk in Canada is free of added hormones and safe to consume. If you do not tolerate milk speak to a dietitian about other options.

I had colorectal surgery and/or radiation treatment; can I eat high fibre foods now?

After bowel surgery or treatments such as radiation, you may not tolerate the recommended amount of fibre which is 21–38 grams per day for adults. Speak to your registered dietitian whether increasing fibre is right for you. Take extra time adding fibre to your diet in small amounts and note any signs of intolerance such as gas, bloating, cramping, diarrhea or increased ostomy output. Write down foods you tolerate and which foods and amounts that cause you problems. Always be sure to include the recommended 8-10 cups of fluids while increasing fibre.

Should I avoid sugar?

Favour drinking fluids with no added sugar such as water and decaffeinated tea or coffee. Avoid drinks with added sugar, such as juice, soda, pop, energy and sports drinks. Diets high in added sugar and ultra-processed foods are linked to weight gain. Too much body weight is a risk factor for heart disease, diabetes and cancer. However, natural sugar (found in whole fruit, starchy vegetables such as potatoes, beans and whole grains) are healthy carbohydrates and they should be part of your diet.

Do I have to lose weight?

Cancer prevention guidelines encourage being at a healthy weight. Thus, if you are overweight, it might be beneficial to lose weight after your cancer recovery.

Public messages about how much weight someone can lose are often unrealistic and misleading. There is a healthy or “best weight” for everyone.⁵ This means the weight you naturally achieve and maintain when eating healthy and following a healthy lifestyle, not dieting. For some a healthy weight may be their current weight, while for others losing 10% from a current weight may be ideal for reducing health risk.

MYTHS

TABLE 2: WEIGHT LOSS MYTH AND FACT

FACTS

Weight loss prevents cancer	Weight loss may reduce your risk of cancer if you are overweight. Although weight loss is often recommended to reduce risk of cancer recurrence, there are no long-term studies in cancer survivors demonstrating that weight loss prevents recurrence or improves survival. Weight loss does have benefits for other health conditions such as diabetes.
A low carb, high protein diet is best for weight loss	Research shows all diets see similar weight loss at the two-year mark. ^{7,8} However, healthy eating over dieting is recommended.
Being as lean as possible means being within a certain weight range	Live a healthy lifestyle to achieve your “best weight” is recommended. Recent studies show if you are overweight but lead a healthy lifestyle you may not be at higher risk than someone who is lean and unhealthy. ⁹
Many people lose weight and maintain it	Research show only 3% of people who lose weight are able to maintain it lifelong. This is another reason to focus on healthy eating rather than dieting.
Exercise helps you lose lots of weight	Exercise alone does not help weight loss very much. ¹⁰ Changing eating habits combined with exercise helps prevent cancer recurrence and may aid weight loss.

What is the best diet for healthy weight loss?

There is no best diet for weight loss. Healthy eating over dieting, along with being active daily is best.

Following our tips in this guide will help you achieve healthy eating and a lifestyle for cancer prevention, which can lead to a healthier weight. Remember, making these changes gradually will lead to better success:

- Eat **balanced meals and snacks** as described in the first part of this guide.
- Watch the **size of portions** you eat.
- **Read nutrition facts** on food labels (see *resource* section).
- **Be realistic** about how much weight you may be able to lose and remember even just 10% weight loss may reduce health risks significantly.
- **Eat and drink less calories:**
 - Eat when hungry, not starving, and stop when feeling comfortable, not full.
 - Choose healthy snacks when hungry (e.g. hummus and veggies, fruit and yogurt).
 - Choosing zero calorie drinks like water, sparkling water, herbal or green tea.
 - Limit foods high in fats and/or sugar, such as fried foods, pastries and candy.
 - Limit or avoid alcohol (wine, beer, spirits).
 - Drink two glasses of water just before meals.¹¹
- **Feel full longer:**
 - Eat mindfully. Sit without distractions like TV, and eat slowly to help you notice you're satisfied.
 - Choose lean protein, high-fibre foods, moderate amounts of healthy fats and fruits and/or vegetables at every meal, to slow digestion.
 - Consider swapping less healthy food choices for healthy, more filling choices (**TABLE 3**).
- **Get physically active:**
 - Choose activities you enjoy and schedule them as top priority. Find an exercise partner for motivation.
 - Walk a few thousand steps per day if you cannot fit in any exercises such as biking or a fitness class.
 - Take the stairs up one or two flights instead of the elevator or escalator.
 - Walk short distances instead of driving.
 - Take a walking lunch break.
 - Park your car farther away from the mall and office.
- **Learn to feel good about yourself** no matter your weight.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Poor sleep has been linked to weight gain.

TABLE 3: SWAPS THAT SATISFY WHILE AIDING WEIGHT LOSS

LIMIT	SWAP FOR
• Low fibre foods (e.g. white bread, white rice, white pasta, cake or pastry, sugar)	✓ High fibre foods (e.g. whole grain bread, brown or wild rice, whole grain pasta, buckwheat or quinoa)
• Restaurant meals and take out dining	✓ Making most meals and snacks at home
• Second helpings by asking yourself “am I still hungry?”	✓ Choosing second helpings of veggies or fruit as filling foods if still hungry
• Eating when bored, upset or stressed	✓ Walking, reading or listening to music to lift your mood
• Bringing high-calorie snacks with only few nutrients into your home or work place (e.g. candy, chips or baked goods)	✓ Keeping a variety of healthy snacks on hand (e.g. Greek yogurt, fruit, vegetables cheese, nuts)
• Snacking from a large container	✓ Portioning out your snacks into small containers
• Dried fruit and trail mix to small servings	✓ Choosing fresh fruit more often
• Juice, it can add up to too many calories	✓ Carbonated water with a touch of juice, cut fruit or berries for more flavour

RESOURCES

Recipes

www.foodsthatfightcancer.ca
www.pulsecanada.com
www.unlockfood.ca
www.halfyourplate.ca

www.eggs.ca/recipes
www.dairygoodness.ca
www.aicr.org
Type ELLICSR kitchen on
Youtube

Stop smoking

www.smokershelpline.ca

Colorectal Cancer Canada

www.colorectalcancercanada.com

Understanding food labels in Canada

www.unlockfood.ca

Nourish Extra guides for people with colorectal cancer:

Part 1: What to eat and drink after ostomy surgery, Part 2: Managing nutrition-related side effects, Part 3: Eat well after treatment. View/download www.nourishonline.ca

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MEATLESS CHILI

Nutritious comfort food to make ahead and freeze in portions

Preparation Time: **10 minutes** Cooking: **1.5 hours** Servings: **8**

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp olive oil	2 × 398mL can tomato sauce*
1 large onion, diced	1 × 156mL can tomato paste*
1 cup fresh white mushrooms, diced	1 × 540mL can red kidney beans*
2 bell peppers, various colours, diced	1 × 540mL can lentils*
1 clove fresh garlic, chopped	Chili powder, cayenne pepper, Italian seasoning, salt, black pepper to taste
1 × 796mL can diced tomatoes*	

* no salt added products, if possible

PREPARATION

1. Heat olive oil in a large, heavy-bottom pot.
2. Fry onion, mushrooms, peppers and garlic over medium heat until onions become translucent.
3. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce and paste.
4. Rinse beans, chickpeas and lentils and add to the pot.
5. Reduce heat and simmer for 1 ½ hours. Stir frequently to prevent sauce from sticking.
6. Add seasoning to taste.

Nutrition facts for serving size (1 ½ cups): 222 calories, 1g fat, 13g protein, 11.3g fibre, 41g carbohydrates, 43mg sodium

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