It's Berry Good For You!

The Vital Role of Nutrition in Cancer Prevention, Cancer Treatment

By: Maggie Downs

One of the best weapons in fighting cancer could be your fork.
"Whether you want to prevent cancer or are currently fighting it, it's important to provide your body with the proper fuel," says Carolyn Katzin, MSPH, CNS, MNT, a nutritionist who works with Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center. "My goal here is to help people make small changes that can have a profound effect on overall health."

Short on time and cooking know-how? "Add a serving of organic blueberries to your diet every day," says Katzin. "That is the one thing everybody could do right now for better health."

If you've already begun treatment for cancer, Katzin recommends focusing on two critical areas of your diet. "Getting enough protein is incredibly important," she says. "For most people, that means adding one more serving per day. Also, sufficient hydration is essential, and in some cases, that means electrolytes as well."

For cancer prevention, Katzin recommends a Mediterranean, plant-based diet, rich in antioxidants. According to the National Cancer Institute, at least 35 percent of all cancers have a nutritional connection, which is why Katzin recommends giving meals a nutritional makeover with these tips:

Veggie and Fruit Power
- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day — eight to 10 servings are even better.
- Eat a salad every day with olive oil and lemon juice, or balsamic vinegar. Add pine nuts, walnuts or almonds on top of your salad for omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins and dietary fiber. Adding hard-boiled egg whites increases the protein.
- Eat lots of fresh fruit.

Super Berries
- Half a cup of berries (fresh or frozen) has as much cancer fighting antioxidant activity as five servings of most other fruits and vegetables.
- Pack a lot of power into your breakfast by tossing berries on your cereal or by making a smoothie.

Eat Often
- Eat high fiber, folate-rich beans and peas three or more times per week.
- Eat all types of cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bok choy and other cruciferous vegetables which are particularly rich in cancer-fighting phytonutrients.
- Limit soy food phytoestrogens to no more than 30 mg per day if you have estrogen receptor positive breast cancer.

- Use garlic when cooking.
- Use watercress often — it is rich in beta carotene and other phytonutrients.
- Eat watermelon, pink grapefruit and tomatoes often for lycopene and other phytonutrients.
- Eat green, red and yellow bell peppers often for vitamin C.
- Eat cantaloupe, pomegranates, blueberries, apricots, spinach and carrots often for beta carotene.
- Always include lettuce and tomato in your sandwiches. If possible, ask for peppers, spinach and other vegetables.

The Furious Five Cancer Fighting Foods

Though all fruits and vegetables contain nutritional goodness, these five foods are so fierce they've been dubbed the furious five for their cancer-preventing and cancer-fighting potential.

Watercress

Twice the calcium of milk, twice the iron of spinach and richer in folic acid, vitamins A, C, E and B6.

Berries

The darker the berry, the more they will hold free radicals at bay.

Guava Juice

One of the richest fruit-based sources of vitamin C. This tangy juice also contains vitamin A, copper, manganese and folate, which is necessary for producing new, healthy cells.

Avocado

Rich in powerful antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, as well as vitamins, minerals, fiber and healthy oleic acid.

Walnuts

One of the best plant sources of protein, walnuts are incredibly rich in fiber, B vitamins, magnesium, antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids.

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