A Matter of Choices: 3 Easy-to-Swallow Dietary Tips for Changing Your Cancer Risk

The Healthy Dose
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Cancer is expected to surpass cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death in Arizona within the next 20 years. While exemplary treatments are available and new immunotherapies hold promise for curing the disease, prevention of cancer is our ultimate goal. Here are three easy-to-swallow tips for changing your cancer risk through dietary choices.

1. **If you are overweight, reduce your weight by 5 percent.** That is all. Not 25, 30 or 40 percent, but just 5 percent! To get there, simply write down what you eat, cut your portions by 30 percent and select low energy-density foods, such as fruits and vegetables, lean poultry and fish, and high-fiber grains or legumes such as beans, peas and lentils. **Drink water** [1] all day, every day, instead of energy-dense drinks [2] such as full sugar soft drinks, fruit smoothies, many flavored coffee and tea drinks, and some energy drinks.

2. **Eat to poop.** Fiber [3] and water are the perfect combination to improve your daily bowel movements. Regularity is certainly important to help prevent colorectal cancer, but the benefits of fiber do not stop there. Fiber also helps to reduce blood glucose levels, one factor that can add to cancer risk. It also fills you up so you are not as hungry between meals. Add a hefty dose of fiber to your day (30 grams or more) by following this simple recipe:

   - A bowl of high-fiber cereal at breakfast (8 or more grams) with 1 tablespoon of flax seed (3 grams).
   - Two cups of green salad at lunch (7 grams) with 1/4 cup black beans (7 grams), half an apple (3 grams), 1 tablespoon of sunflower seeds (1 gram) and low-fat dressing.
   - Lean protein and 1 cup of brown rice at dinner (4 grams) with a side of 1 cup of broccoli (2 grams) and a snack of 1 cup of fresh berries (8 grams) with half a cup of sorbet.

3. **Eat to stay active.** Having the energy to stay active [4] is critical to cancer prevention and the foods we eat play a big role not only in improving our energy level but also in slowing us down when we make poor choices. To get more energy, eat healthful foods that provide a variety of health-promoting properties such as B vitamins for energy production, water for hydration, or chia seeds for concentrated calories when you need them most. Green tea or coffee can provide the boost of caffeine? but you don't want this to be your only energy source. Fresh fruits combined with nuts can give you balanced nutrients while promoting a steady blood glucose level? also important to having the energy you need to stay active.

* A version of this article originally appeared on The Healthy Dose [5], a monthly health and wellness blog produced by UA Health Sciences.
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