

Nutritional Cancer Prevention: Answers to Commonly Asked Questions About how Fruits and Vegetables can be Used to Change Cancer Risk

Overall evidence suggests increased consumption of fruits and vegetables results in some lowering of risk for several types of cancer, though some studies have found limited or no effects.

Studies do suggest that eating more fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of developing obesity, thus indirectly decreasing cancer risk. The best advice is to eat at least 2½ cups of a variety of colorful vegetables and fruits each day.

Is there a difference in the nutritional value of fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables and fruits?

Fresh foods have high nutritional value. The more ripe the fruits are, the greater the nutritional value. Foods may lose some nutrient value in the time between harvesting and eating.

Frozen foods can actually be more nutritious than fresh foods if picked ripe and quickly frozen.

Canning foods is more likely to reduce heat-sensitive and water-soluble nutrients because of the high heat that must be used in the process.

Does cooking affect the nutritional value of vegetables?

Microwaving and steaming are thought of as the best way to preserve the nutritional content of vegetables.

Raw vegetables also preserve their nutritional content.

Boiling vegetables, especially for long periods, can remove their water-soluble vitamins.

Sautéing in oil may increase the availability of fat soluble beneficial phytochemicals.

Should I be juicing my vegetables and fruits?

Juicing can add variety to the diet and can be a good way to get your vegetables and fruits, especially if chewing or swallowing is a problem. Juicing also helps the body absorb some of the nutrients in vegetables and fruits, but juices contain less fiber and may be less filling than whole vegetables and fruits. Commercially juiced products should be **100% vegetable or fruit juices**. They should also be pasteurized to kill harmful germs.

Do vegetarian diets reduce cancer risk?

Vegetarian diets have many health-promoting features, including high fiber and vitamins and low levels of saturated fat and red/processed meats. With that in mind, it is reasonable to suggest that vegetarian diets may be helpful in lowering cancer risk. However, when comparing vegetarian diets to Western diets featuring lower levels of animal products than typically consumed, currently available research has not demonstrated a clear link between vegetarian diets and decreased cancer risk.