



Health & Wellbeing Bulletin

Cancer Awareness Bulletin

The foods you choose each day are one of the most important factors in helping protect you against cancer. Many people eat a diet that is far too high in fat and calories. Even more important is what the average diet lacks: a variety of vegetables, fruits and wholegrain foods. Eating a healthier diet protects against cancer, but also against heart disease, stroke and a number of other health problems.

How is diet related to Cancer?

Dietary factors are thought to account for around 30% of cancers in the developed world and 20% in developing countries. Research shows that many forms of cancer are preventable and that as many as 30-40% of all cancer cases can be prevented by the types of food we choose to eat. Large reductions of physical activity over the last thirty years along with increasing obesity in many populations have rendered many people more susceptible than ever to developing certain cancers. Obesity particularly can increase the risk of cancers of the food pipe, bowel, breast, womb and kidney. Large quantities of alcohol can lead to oesophageal, liver and throat cancers, along with an increase in the risk of breast cancer.

Dietary Supplements

In some circumstances dietary supplements are useful – for example, taking folic acid during pregnancy. However, scientists believe that it is the complex mix of vitamins and minerals found naturally in foods that help to reduce our risk of disease. Scientists now think that these nutrients work together to help fight off illnesses such as cancer. The same effect cannot be achieved by taking dietary supplements. Therefore, the best advice is to carry on eating your five or more portions of vegetables and fruits a day and avoid popping those pills as a substitute for a healthy diet.

How can I help Prevent Cancer?

Eating a balanced diet that is low in fat and refined carbohydrates and rich in fruit, vegetables, pulses, lean meat, fish, poultry and wholegrains.

- Eat high fibre foods like wholegrain bread, high fibre breakfast cereals like porridge and muesli, wholegrain pasta, beans, peas and lentils
- Eat at least five different portions of fruit and vegetables every day
- Eat smaller and fewer portions of processed fatty meats – try seafood, and protein rich beans, nuts or seeds instead.
- Select foods low in fat and salt
- Read and compare food labels
- Ensure adequate fluid intake
- Prepare and store food safely
- And most importantly try to ensure nutritional balance in your daily intake

Exercise & Diet

A stable weight is maintained by balancing energy intake through food with energy expenditure through physical activity. When this balance is disrupted, and we consume more calories than we use up, the body stores excess energy as fat.

- Try to maintain a healthy body weight by combining a balanced diet with regular exercise
- Try to do 30 minutes of moderate activity at least 5 times a week
- Aim to have 3-4 alcohol free days per week

Interesting Facts

- Survival rates for most cancers are improving. This is the single most important fact that people should be aware of. So, for a disease like breast cancer the five-year survival rate in Ireland stands at 80% and has been rising steadily.
- Early diagnosis improves survival rates even further. If a cancer is caught early your chances of making a full recovery are much higher. So it is essential that people have regular health checks and make themselves aware of the warning signs. For example, an early diagnosis of breast cancer will improve your chances of survival to 90%.
- Plenty of exercise, a balanced diet, non-smoking and sensible drinking habits all help to reduce your chances of developing cancer. These are precautions everyone can and should take.
- Learning is the key. By learning how to spot whether you are in an “at risk” group, learning the simple precautions you should be taking and learning what warning signs to look out for, you can improve your chances of never developing the disease, ensure you spot it early if you do and maximise the likelihood of a full recovery.

Cancer Prevention Tips

- Eat a balanced diet that is low in fat, refined carbohydrates and salt
- Ensure your diet is rich in fruit, vegetables, pulses, lean meat, fish, poultry and wholegrains
- Exercise for 30 minutes at least 5 times a week
- Have 3-4 alcohol free days per week.
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Prepare and store food safely.
- Ensure nutritional balance in your daily intake.
- Regular health checks are essential
- Become aware of warning signs
- Stop Smoking

For more information on Cancer awareness you can contact the Marie Keating Foundation on info@mariekeating.ie and www.mariekeating.ie

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