

Prostate Health

CANCER PREVENTION

Science cannot always explain why one person gets cancer and another does not. However, scientists have studied general patterns of cancer in the population throughout the world to learn what things in our environment and what things in our lives may increase our chance of developing cancer.

Anything that increases a person's chance of developing a disease is called a **RISK FACTOR**; anything that decreases a person's chance of developing a disease is called a **PROTECTIVE FACTOR**. Some of the risk factors for cancer can be avoided (i.e. modifiable risk factors) and others cannot (i.e. non-modifiable). Prevention means **AVOIDING THE RISK FACTORS** and **INCREASING THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS** that can be controlled to decrease the chance of developing cancer.

Speak with your healthcare provider about all the methods of preventing cancer that might be effective for you, including your risk factors and protective factors.

THE PROSTATE and MEN'S HEALTH

The prostate is a gland in males (located between the bladder and the rectum) that is involved in the production of semen. The normal prostate gland is the size of a walnut and surrounds the urethra—the tube that carries urine from the bladder.

Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer among men in the United States. Although the number of men with this disease is large (more than 200,000 men are diagnosed annually), the majority of men diagnosed with prostate cancer do not die of it. When diagnosed early, prostate cancer is highly treatable.

Most men first become aware of their prostate when it causes some discomfort and affects urination. In younger men, the prostate may become inflamed, a condition called prostatitis. As men enter middle age and then their later years, the prostate often enlarges. This condition is called benign prostatic hypertrophy (BHP). Some of the symptoms for BHP may be the same as those for prostate cancer, so it is important to tell your healthcare provider about them promptly.

KNOW THE SIGNS and SYMPTOMS

These and other symptoms may be caused by prostate cancer. Other conditions may cause the same symptoms. Consult your healthcare provider if any of the following problems occur:

- **Weak or interrupted flow of urine**
- **Frequent urination (especially at night)**
- **Trouble urinating**
- **Pain or burning during urination**
- **Blood in the urine or semen**
- **A pain in the back, hips or pelvis that doesn't go away**
- **Painful ejaculation**



THE PROSTATE and CANCER PREVENTION

Scientists now believe that roughly one-third of all cancer cases could be prevented through sensible dietary choices, maintaining a healthy body weight and keeping physically active every day. There are several known **RISK FACTORS** and **PROTECTIVE FACTORS** for prostate cancer. The expert report, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective* from the American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) and the World Cancer Research Fund Global Network outlines the risk and protective factors that we can control to reduce the risk of developing cancer, including prostate cancer. The evidence shows that we have more control over our risk for cancer than one might think. Here are some of the findings and recommendations from the report:

- **CHOOSE A LOW-FAT DIET.** A diet high in fat, especially animal fat, may be associated with an increased risk of prostate cancer. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables as part of a low-fat diet provides a wide array of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytochemicals, which are associated with lower cancer risk and overall health. Consuming foods high in beta-carotene (dark yellow and orange-hued fruits and vegetables) is associated with a convincing decreased risk for prostate cancer. Choosing sources of vitamin E (nuts, seeds and vegetable oils like canola and olive) in place of animal fats is also associated with lower prostate cancer risk.
- **EAT A DIET RICH IN SELENIUM.** Selenium is a mineral that acts as an antioxidant to help prevent cell damage. According to the expert report, there is convincing evidence that foods high in selenium protect against prostate cancer. Selenium is found in many foods, including: Brazil nuts, whole grains, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, seafood, poultry and lean meats. Selenium supplements have a probable association with decreasing risk of prostate cancer, but choose food first.
- **CHOOSE LYCOPENE-RICH FOODS DAILY.** Lycopene is an antioxidant that protects against cell damage. Research has found substantial evidence that foods containing lycopene likely protect against prostate cancer. Lycopene is abundant in red-hued plant foods, such as tomatoes and tomato products (including ketchup), watermelon and pink grapefruit. These foods provide the body with lycopene more effectively than lycopene supplements. According to the research, lycopene is best absorbed from cooked and pureed foods and when eaten with a small amount of healthy fat, such as olive oil.
- **GET ADEQUATE CALCIUM, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.** For bone and colon health, men should strive to meet their basic calcium needs daily: 1,000 milligrams (mg) daily for men ages 19-49 and 1,200 mg for men ages 50+. But when it comes to calcium and men, too much is NOT a good thing. Studies show that a diet high in dairy products and calcium may be linked to a probable increased risk of prostate cancer, although the increase may be small. Researchers note that a high calcium intake increases cell growth and cell division in the prostate, which may promote the development of cancer cells. However, experts also caution that diets low in calcium reduce bone health and may increase risk of colon cancer. Men should strive to *achieve*, but *not exceed* their daily calcium requirements.
- **INCLUDE MORE LEGUMES IN YOUR DIET.** According to the expert report, consuming legumes helps to reduce prostate cancer risk. Try to include legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils) in the diet daily. While soybeans in particular have shown cancer-fighting promise in some studies, there is no consensus that soy protects against prostate cancer. Soy foods (tofu, tempeh and soy milk), in addition to other legumes, can be incorporated as part of a balanced diet as a source of protein and cholesterol-lowering soluble fiber.
- **LIMIT PROCESSED MEATS TO OCCASIONAL USE ONLY.** The expert report found limited but suggestive evidence for increased prostate cancer risk from eating processed meats (usually red meat like pork and beef.) Processed meats have been smoked, cured, salted or chemically preserved like bacon, ham, sausage, hot dogs, pepperoni, salami and bologna. Researchers have concluded that eating them regularly may lead to higher risk for prostate cancer and several other cancers, so limit your intake to very occasional consumption, if at all.

This information was adapted from the Healthwise® Knowledgebase, which can be accessed at your Member Web site. For more information on prostate health and other men's health issues, log onto your Member Web site at www.highmark.com and select your service region. Click on "Health Topics" to search the Healthwise Knowledgebase. For more information on the AICR recommendations for *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer*, visit their Web site at www.aicr.org.

