What nutrients and type of diet decreases my risk for breast cancer?

Phytochemicals, naturally-occurring compounds found in plant foods, help to prevent cancer cells from developing. Since countless phytochemicals exist, the best way to incorporate them into your diet is to eat a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, grains and beans/legumes. It is suggested to eat a “rainbow” of colors daily as each color offers a different benefit. A healthy diet that includes the following is optimal for preventing breast cancer:

- Fruits
- Vegetables, especially:
  - Garlic and cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, radishes, turnips, cabbages, brussels sprouts, leafy greens including kale, bok choy, arugula)
- Lean protein (beef, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, beans, peas, lentils, legumes)
- Low-fat dairy (milk, yogurt, kefir, cheeses)
- Whole grains and root starches (brown rice, quinoa, millet, barley, bulgur wheat, potatoes, corn, winter squashes)
- Healthy fats (nuts, seeds, avocado, plant-based oils, small amounts of coconut)

Foods to avoid include:

- Processed meats (salamis, bologna, hot dog)
- Excessive red meat from non-organic sources
- Refined grains (“white” flours)
- Refined sugars (“white” sugars)
- Refined oils (hydrogenated oils and trans-fats)
- High-fat dairy products (frequent consumption)
Is there a special diet I should follow if I am diagnosed with breast cancer?

If diagnosed, the same basic diet guidelines to decrease your risk of breast cancer apply. It is also suggested to meet with a Registered Dietitian immediately after diagnosis for guidance in managing individual nutritional concerns, especially in regard to healthy weight management.

Is it okay to eat soy?

You need to defer to your own healthcare team on whether soy intake is appropriate for your own body and state of health. However, current studies affirm that soy foods do not appear to increase breast cancer risk, and may even lower initial risk of breast cancer (as well as risk of recurrence), though further investigation is needed.

Do nutritional supplements have a place in breast cancer prevention?

Sometimes certain supplements are appropriate. A discussion with your doctor and healthcare team is necessary to determine whether supplements should be included as part of your regimen.

Are there any additional “risk reducers” I should consider?

Other factors that may reduce risk include:
- Physical Activity (per your ability)
- Avoiding excessive alcohol intake. Please defer to your own healthcare team for whether alcohol intake is appropriate for your own body and state of health.

To learn more about the Breast Health Center, call 516.663.3887

For more information on Outpatient Oncology Nutrition Services, please call 516.663.1016

Information provided by the Center for Cancer Care in collaboration with the Breast Health Center.