



## Healthy Eating and Prostate Cancer

For many people living with prostate cancer, the most important diet focus is to eat foods to manage and lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis, and that help you have your best weight. Heart disease, diabetes, and obesity are the most common conditions in Canada and some treatments for prostate cancer also increase a person's risk for these conditions.

A whole food plant-based diet is recommended for people with prostate cancer. A whole plant-based diet includes mostly vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes (e.g., beans, peas, and lentils), nuts and seeds. Moderate amounts of fish, poultry, eggs, and low-fat dairy, and small amounts of red meat can also be included in a plant-based diet.

Whole foods are those that are closest to the natural state of how they were grown or harvested. Whole plant-based foods provide a variety of cancer-fighting compounds, including vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phytonutrients, and fibre. Whole plant-based foods are often lower in calories and provide more fibre and healthier fats compared to most animal-based and processed foods. Eating mainly whole plant-based foods is heart healthy and can help you have a healthy weight. Research suggests that having excess body fat can cause hormonal changes and inflammation that promote cancer.

Current research tells us that eating food, rather than taking supplements, is the best way to get plant-based cancer-fighting compounds. Whole foods provide a variety of beneficial compounds in amounts that work together in special ways to support your best health. While many individual foods, vitamins, minerals, and nutrients are studied to see how they affect the growth of prostate cancer, the chance of prostate cancer returning (recurrence) or shorter life after diagnosis, research suggests that it is what you eat overall that has the greatest impact on your health. While not yet proven, we've highlighted below some foods that research hints might affect prostate cancer growth and overall longevity.

### Notes:

- A plant-based diet is usually high in fibre. If you have diarrhea or other bowel problems, you may need to eat less fibre.
- If you have diarrhea, concerns about your weight, or would like more information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, talk with a registered dietitian.

## Recommendations

**Eat a balanced diet including lots of vegetables, fruits, and a range of whole grains, and plant-based protein foods every day.**

Use your plate as a guide. Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit, one-quarter of your plate with whole grains, and one-quarter of your plate with protein-rich foods.

**Include a variety of vegetables and fruit.**

Some, but not all studies suggest that eating lycopene rich foods and cruciferous vegetables may slow the growth of prostate cancer. Lycopene is a carotenoid found in some red coloured plants. This includes tomato products (e.g. tomato paste, sauce, and juice), watermelon, and pink grapefruit. Cruciferous vegetables include bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, and brussels sprouts.

### **Recommendations:**

- Fill half your plate with fruit or vegetables at every meal.
- Eat a wide variety of different coloured vegetables and fruits including dark green, red, orange, yellow, purple, and white.
- Choose non-starchy vegetables more often. Almost all vegetables are non-starchy, but the exceptions include potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, and corn. When you eat starchy vegetables, if they have skins, keep them on and serve them with other non-starchy vegetables.
- Choose whole fruits and vegetables instead of juice.
- Eat lycopene rich foods often.
- Eat cruciferous vegetables often.

### **Ideas to put into action**

To increase your intake of vegetables and fruit:

- Add fruit to your breakfast. Try berries with oatmeal, sliced banana on peanut butter toast, or serve sliced melon or other fruit as a side.
- Add cooked or sautéed vegetables to a hot breakfast like eggs or baked beans. Tomatoes, bell peppers or mushrooms are breakfast favourites.
- Pack fruit or bite-sized veggies and fruits for snacks (for example: apples, orange, carrots, cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices, bell peppers).
- Have a side salad with your lunch or dinner.
- Increase the portions of vegetables with your meals. A few ideas are roasted broccoli or cauliflower, steamed green beans, sautéed spinach, or kale.
- Use frozen fruit and vegetables for an easy way to increase your intake.

### **Eat protein foods with all meals, and choose plant-based protein foods often.**

Protein is an important nutrient. It plays a role in almost all body functions including healing and immunity, and is a key building block of bones and muscles.

Protein is found in many foods. One way to group protein foods is whether they come from a plant or an animal. Plant-based protein foods include legumes (e.g., beans, peas, and lentils), soy foods, and nuts and seeds. Animal-based protein foods include fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs, meats, milk, and dairy products.

Eating plant-based proteins often is encouraged. These foods are rich in cancer-fighting compounds and provide more fibre and less saturated fat than some other types of protein foods. Plant-based protein foods, other than nuts and seeds, are also lower in calories.

A few studies suggest that a high intake of whole milk increases the risk of shorter life in people with prostate cancer. Some, but not all studies suggest a link with eating too much red and processed meats to increased prostate cancer recurrence and shorter life. Other studies suggest soy foods might be helpful to slow the growth of prostate cancer or lower the chance of it coming back, while other studies haven't shown any impact. We need more research to confirm the effects of these foods on prostate cancer. Yet, it is clear that too much red and processed meats increase the risk for colorectal cancer, and that type of fats in high fat dairy and meats can be harmful for heart health. Limiting these foods for your overall health is encouraged.

### Recommendations:

- Fill a ¼ of your plate with protein rich foods at each meal.
- Eat plant-based protein foods often instead of other types of protein foods.
  - Both dried and canned legumes (e.g., beans, peas, and lentils) are good options
  - Choose less processed soy foods such as tofu and unsweetened fortified soy beverages
  - Choose raw or dry-roasted unsalted nuts and seeds, or butters that list peanut, nuts, or seeds as the only ingredient
- When eating animal protein choose lean and lower-fat options.
  - This includes skinless poultry, fish, eggs, and low-fat milk, yogurt, and other dairy products (2% milk fat (M.F.) or lower)
- Limit or avoid:
  - Red meat. Red meat includes beef, pork, lamb, and goat. If you eat red meat, have it no more than about three times per week and have less than a total amount of 500 grams (18 ounces) cooked each week.
  - Avoid processed meat or eat very little. Processed meats include bacon, ham, deli meats, and hotdogs.
  - Limit fatty meats, skin on poultry, battered or deep-fried fish, and high fat dairy foods (higher than 2% M.F.)

### Ideas to put into action

To increase plant-based protein:

- Have hummus or bean dips with vegetables as a snack.
- Add chickpeas or beans to a salad.
- Make dips or sandwich spreads with legumes like chickpeas, black beans, or pinto beans.
- Add legumes like split peas, chickpeas, kidney beans, edamame, lentils, and black beans to soups, stews, casseroles, pastas, and stir fries.
- Try veggie burgers and vegetable pasta sauce made with plant-based protein.



- Use beans rather than meat in enchiladas.
- Try legume spreads on flatbread with added chopped vegetables.
- Cook tofu in a vegetable stir fry.
- Make baked goods with pureed legumes.
- Add nuts or seeds to hot or cold cereal.
- Replace half of the meat in stews, soups, or casseroles with a plant-based protein. For example, mix lentils or beans with beef or chicken.
- Cook a vegetarian meal one day a week. Change a favourite recipe to be plant-based, for example prepare chili with beans and no meat or look for new recipes that don't use meat.

**Tips:**

- Use dried split red lentils or smaller legumes to shorten cooking time.
- Use low-salt canned legumes for an easy way to add beans to your meals.

**Choose whole grains**

Whole grain foods provide fibre, minerals, vitamins, and other beneficial compounds that may have cancer fighting compounds. Whole grains are a healthier choice than refined grains. Refined grains have had the naturally occurring fibre and other beneficial compounds removed during processing. In Canada, some refined grains have vitamins and minerals added back. They are then called “enriched”, but the beneficial cancer fighting compounds can't be added back.

**Recommendations:**

- Fill up to ¼ of your plate with whole grains.

Whole grain foods include:

- |   |                                 |                                    |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> whole oats or oatmeal | <input type="radio"/> quinoa    | <input type="radio"/> whole barley |
| <input type="radio"/> whole grain pastas    | <input type="radio"/> bulgur    | <input type="radio"/> whole rye    |
| <input type="radio"/> whole grain breads    | <input type="radio"/> corn meal | <input type="radio"/> brown rice   |

- Limit the amount and how often you eat refined grain products such as white bread, white pasta, cakes, pastries, cookies made with white flour, and white rice.

**Ideas to put into action**

- Cooking whole grains can take more time. To make it easier, make enough for a few meals at one time, or freeze some for later.
- Try whole grain bread instead of white or refined. Look for breads with 4 or more grams of fibre per slice.
- Swap a refined breakfast cereal to a whole grain cold cereal, porridge, muesli, or granola.
- Use brown or wild rice instead of white rice.
- Have whole grain pasta instead of white pasta.
- Add a whole grain such as quinoa, barley, or bulgur to soups.

## Choose healthy fats

Healthy fats are mainly found in plant-based foods and fatty fish. Unhealthy (saturated) fats are mainly found in animal sources, some highly processed foods and some tropical oils. Research suggests eating saturated fats may increase the risk of prostate cancer recurrence and reduce overall longevity.

### Recommendations:

- Include foods with healthy fats on a regular basis. Healthy fats are found in:
  - Avocado, fish (especially oily fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, and sardines), nuts and seeds and oils such as olive or canola oil.
- Limit foods high in unhealthy (saturated) fat such as:
  - High fat milk and milk products (cheese, cream, and ice cream)
  - Butter, palm, or coconut oils
  - Skin on poultry
  - Fatty meats, including processed meat products like deli meats, sausages, and bacon
  - High fat fast food, convenience food and processed foods such as chips and other snack foods, baked goods, French fries, and deep-fried foods

Choose smaller portions of foods high in unhealthy fat if you eat these foods.

For more information, check out the “Prostate Cancer: Choosing Healthy Fats” handout.

Tip: If you are trying to lose weight be mindful of portion sizes for nuts, seeds, and other plant-based fats like avocado and olive oil. These foods are higher in calories than other plant foods.

## Limit highly processed foods

Highly processed foods and drinks can be high in added sugar, sodium, and fats. They are often low in the nutrients that keep you healthy. They are also usually high in calories, which can contribute to weight gain.

**Recommendation:** Eat highly processed foods less often and keep portions small when you eat them.

Highly processed foods include:

- sugary drinks like soda pop, sweetened coffee and tea beverages, lemonade, and fruit drinks
- chips and other snack foods
- French fries
- instant noodles and packaged soups
- deep fried foods
- sweetened cereals
- candy
- ice cream
- baked goods such as pie, cake, donuts, and cookies



### Changing your eating habits

It is never too early or too late to start making changes for your health and well-being. Even small changes to daily lifestyle habits are likely to have good effects on health.

You can make changes gradually. While some people can make a lot of changes quickly, for most people slow gradual changes are the most manageable. By making small changes you can find out what really works for you and find a new way of eating that you can stick to for the long term.

### For more information:

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, contact the **Prostate Cancer Supportive Care (PCSC) Program's Lifestyle Module: Nutrition and Exercise** at 604-875-4485 or toll-free at 1-844-483-1449, or visit: [www.pcscprogram.ca](http://www.pcscprogram.ca).

You can also talk to your clinic dietitian or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak with a registered dietitian.