



Breast Cancer Risk and Nutrition

WHAT CAN I EAT TO HELP LOWER MY RISK OF BREAST CANCER?

There is no one single thing a person can do, take, or eat to completely eliminate their risk of breast cancer. However, we do know that a person's overall dietary pattern can have a positive impact on their risk of developing cancer.

Eat a whole-foods diet that is mostly plant-based.

Whole food means food that is as close to its natural form as possible. Easy examples include apples, almonds, and broccoli that are eaten raw or are minimally processed before they are eaten. This meaning differs from "whole wheat bread" which is still made from the highly processed powdered form of wheat: flour.

A plant-based diet is one where nutrient-rich plant food make up the foundation, and animal products are used sparingly if at all. A good guide is the Anti-Inflammatory Food Pyramid at DrWeil.com.

Choose from across the spectrum of color.

Vegetables and fruits have a wide variety of *phytochemicals*, which are naturally occurring chemicals with a diverse array of actions on the body. Eating a rainbow of colorful foods daily ensures you are getting many of these powerful chemicals, which we know work together in the body.

SHOULD I BE USING SUPPLEMENTS?

- ❑ Using supplemental forms of one or two of these compounds has not been shown to be an effective means to achieve health goals in general.
- ❑ There could be situations when supplements are necessary; this is something you should talk about with your doctor.

ARE THERE ANY FOODS TO SPECIFICALLY EMPHASIZE?

- ❑ **Fish, fish oil, and flax** are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which studies have suggested can lower a woman's risk of breast cancer. Flax seeds also contain lignan, which has also been suggested to independently reduce breast cancer risk.
- ❑ **Olive oil**, which is high in monounsaturated fat.
- ❑ **Whole soy foods**. Studies have shown that countries with high soy consumption have lower rates of breast cancer. Further research links this protective benefit to *isoflavones*, which is one of the phytoestrogens found in soy.
- ❑ **Broccoli, kale, brussels sprouts, and bok choy** are all a part of the Cruciferous vegetable family, and are highly recommended for breast cancer prevention. They contain the phytochemicals sulforaphane, flavones, and indole-3-carbinol (I#C), which have been shown to affect estrogen levels and thus breast cancer risk.
- ❑ Other foods to enjoy liberally: **onions, garlic, mushrooms, strawberries, raspberries, spinach, chard, asparagus**, and the yellow-colored rhizome we find in curry and mustard: **turmeric**.

IS THERE ANYTHING I SHOULD AVOID TO REDUCE MY RISK OF BREAST CANCER?

- ❑ While one drink a day has been advertised as a "safe" or even possibly beneficial amount for women, **alcohol** has been linked to increase in breast cancer risk. The amount of risk is directly proportional to the amount of alcohol a woman consumes.