



# Wellness at Work

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## April Cancer Awareness Month

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### Healthy Eating & Dieting : The Anti-Cancer Diet

We got some concrete answer from Karen Collins, nutrition advisor for the American Institute for Cancer Research in Washington, D.C.

#### Do preservatives, nitrates, food additives, and other food chemicals cause cancer?

You know, we hear a lot of news stories linking various additives and chemicals and food colorings with cancer risk. It's certainly possible. But at this point, the evidence hasn't shown any real connection.

#### Why do fruits, vegetables, and plant foods seem to protect against cancer?

Plant foods probably offer protection in a number of ways. They provide thousands of phytochemicals, which are natural plant compounds. Many are antioxidants, which seem to protect and repair our DNA. Some antioxidants appear to affect cancer cells, controlling how they grow or spread. The vitamins and minerals in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans also help produce and repair DNA and control cell growth.

#### Are organic foods the best defense against cancer?

Eating organic foods is fine as an option, but it's not necessarily preferable in terms of lowering cancer risk. Although people worry about pesticides residues, not all conventionally grown, non organic crops contain them. Of those that do, less than 1% have them in amounts above the current tolerance levels.

#### Why is keeping normal body weight so important to cancer prevention?

We know that being overweight or obese is strongly linked to an increased risk of several common cancers-like cancer of the colon, breast, kidneys, esophagus, and pancreas to name a few. We think there could be several reasons why.

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*"Vitamin D decreases your risk of osteoporosis, heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, and many common cancers. For optimum production of vitamin D, aim for 2 sessions (at least an hour apart) of 10-15 minutes in the open sun."*

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## The Anti-Cancer Diet

*Continued from front page*

*“Excess body fat can pose a specific risk to older women. After menopause, excess weight is associated with higher levels of estrogen. That can promote the development and growth of estrogen-sensitive cancers of the breast and endometrium.”*

Excess body fat, especially around the waist, is linked with insulin resistance and high insulin levels. Although people associate insulin with blood sugar and diabetes, researchers think that high levels of insulin may promote the growth of cancer cells. Excess fat also seems to trigger inflammation throughout the body, which seems to encourage cancer growth.

### **How does physical activity affects a person’s cancer risks?**

We now think that physical activity has a vital role in lowering cancer risk. It can directly reduce insulin resistance, inflammation, and the levels of reproductive hormones. Indirectly, it can help achieve and maintain weight loss, as well as prevent the weight gain that many adults experience as they get older.

### **Does meat or any other type of food contribute to the risk of cancer?**

There’s a pretty convincing link between red meats and colon cancer, and possibly other cancers as well. It’s not just the fat. Although choosing lean meat is good nutrition, it’s not enough to reduce cancer risk. However, you don’t have to give it up completely. Eating up to 18 ounces of red meat a week seems to be safe. You just want to make meat an occasional food instead of one that you eat daily.

You should also be careful of how much sodium you get—more than 2,400 milligrams a day seems to increase the risk of stomach cancer. Eating fewer processed foods can help with that. Alcohol also increases the risk of several cancers, so from a cancer perspective, the less you drink the better. Women should have no more than one drink a day and men no more than two.

### **Should cancer survivors follow any specific diet? Are there any foods, nutrients, or supplements that they should avoid?**

In general, cancer survivors don’t seem to be any different from anyone else in terms of what they should eat. One exception would be those taking anti-estrogen medications—like tamoxifen or aromatase inhibitors—who may need to avoid soy foods. Soy contains a plant form of estrogen, so it could work against these medications. (Continue on page 3 )

For More Information on company wellness programs and how they may help your company, contact **Healthsync** today.

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## Wellness at Work Pays Off

The average company that implements a wellness program sees a 4 to 1 return on investment. When companies add the increased productivity and decreased absenteeism, they often save more than \$500 per employee per year. Companies who are seeing 15% to 20% increases in health related costs each year should look at implementing wellness programs immediately to help stop this expensive trend. For more information about company wellness and productivity planning, call Ed Dyer at Healthsync.

## Starting a Company Wellness Program

Many companies are faced with healthcare cost increases of 15% or more per year. In most cases, insurance premium rates are based on the health claims of the employee group. Leading companies throughout the country are getting a grip on their healthcare costs by starting wellness programs with their employees.

A wellness program that is well organized generally has a 5 to 1 return on investment, and can be implemented with very little disturbance in a company's workflow. Here are 4 major ingredients to a successful wellness program.

- \* **Get support from senior management for the wellness program**
- \* **Collect data on the company and employees to set a baseline**
- \* **Based on the data, set an action plan to reduce health risks and cost**
- \* **Evaluate the success of your activities and change course as needed**

Today, wellness programs are an important part of strategic planning. As healthcare costs eat up company profits, companies need to aggressively plan their financial defense.

*The Anti-Cancer Diet  
continued from page 2*

### Could you describe the ideal diet for cancer prevention?

There is no specific ideal diet that is perfect for all of us. So we can each come up with a diet that's protective and still works with our lifestyles and food preferences.

But here's an easy way to picture a healthy, protective diet. Every time you eat, aim to have two-thirds of your plate made up of healthy foods, like vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans. Then have the remaining one-third, or less, made up of animal foods, preferably lean poultry, seafood, and very limited amounts of red meats. To add flavor, use moderate amounts of healthy oils, herbs, spices, citrus, and vinegars.

### Monthly Health Fact

According to research, women-with or without the breast cancer gene-who eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, fish, vitamin D, calcium. Phytoestrogens (found in soybeans, seeds, and cereals), and saturated fats (found in avocado, nuts, and fish oil) have a reduced risk of breast cancer. Women who eat a diet high in meat and saturated fats have a greater incidence of breast cancer.

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*"A wellness program that is well organized generally has a 5 to 1 return on investment . . ."*

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*Maintaining proper body weight has tremendous health benefits.*