

Cancer-Fighting Foods

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Research shows that certain dietary patterns can help prevent cancer or slow its growth. Specifically, a Mediterranean or plant-based diet — where most of the foods on your plate come from vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes — is often recommended for cancer prevention.

The cancer-fighting foods in this dietary pattern are filled with antioxidants, vitamins and other compounds that reduce inflammation, protect cells from damage and may prevent the growth and spread of cancer cells.

There is no single food that can prevent or treat cancer. The overall dietary pattern matters more than any one food, so consume a variety of these nourishing foods daily:



- Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, kale and cauliflower.
- Berries, such as blueberries, strawberries and raspberries.
- Leafy green vegetables, such as spinach and romaine.
- Orange vegetables and fruits, such as carrots, squash and oranges.
- Garlic, onions, ginger and turmeric.
- Tomatoes.
- Tea and coffee.
- Nuts and seeds, such as flax, chia and walnuts.
- Beans, peas, lentils and soy.

Note: These foods have been researched for their anti-cancer potential when consumed as part of a healthy dietary pattern.

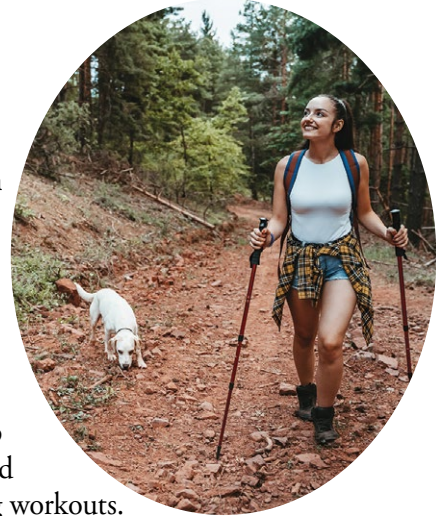
Now that you have a long list of foods to include more often, there's also a short list of foods and beverages to consume less often, since they may contain cancer-promoting compounds. It's wise to cut back on:

- Alcohol, including beer, wine and spirits.
- Processed meat, such as salami, hotdogs and sausages.
- Burnt and charred foods, such as barbecued meat.
- Sugary foods, such as soda and candy.
- Refined grain products, such as white bread, cookies and cake.

An occasional hotdog or sweet treat is not a problem. It's overall daily eating habits that have the largest impact on cancer prevention and matter more than any one meal.

Amp Up Your Walk 5 Ways

Walking is a great form of exercise, especially if you enjoy moving in comfort. It's widely accessible and easy for most. As you adjust to walking for fitness, here are some ways to step up the intensity, benefits and pleasure of your walking workouts.



- 1. Add speed.** Here's how: Take your normal-sized steps or slightly smaller steps and focus on a quicker movement. Keep your shoulders relaxed as you pump your arms close to your body for additional momentum and balance.
- 2. Add incline.** If you walk outdoors, take to the hills. If you use a treadmill, you can ramp up the incline. When walking on flat surfaces begins to feel easier, challenge yourself to ramp up the incline — maintaining the same pace, you'll burn more calories. Extra: Walking uphill also helps strengthen your bones better than walking on flat surfaces does.
- 3. Add intervals.** Alternating between higher and lower intensities throughout your workout yields better fitness improvements and more calorie burn than a continuous steady pace. It's a natural way to boost your speed and walking intensity gradually.
- 4. Add some music.** Studies suggest music helps walkers move faster and longer before feeling their fatigue. Why not consider adding a soundtrack to your workouts for an extra push and pleasure? **Note:** Don't play your favorite tunes too loudly. Protect your hearing and make sure you can still hear sounds around you, such as cars.
- 5. If you have a dog who loves to walk, lucky you.** Add a park route to your walks and spend a few minutes playing fetch along the way with your canine buddy.

If you're not used to regular exercise, get your health care provider's okay first. If you have a chronic condition, such as heart disease, consult your provider before intensifying your walking routine.

Making Sense of Medical Studies

The most common and important purpose of medical studies is to test new medicines, types of surgeries, procedures or medical devices among groups of people. These studies can help researchers confirm how and if new proposed treatments are effective and safe for patient use. For example, trial studies of taking medicine or having surgery can help ensure your treatment was tested scientifically before you use it as a patient.

When you're researching health and medical topics, you may find various types of medical research, including experiments, comparative analyses, surveys and interviews.

Clinical studies are the most thorough. They compare a medicine, device or new treatment against something else, such as: (a) the current medicine used to treat the same disease, (b) a treatment that contains no active ingredients, called a placebo or (c) no treatment. Clinical trials may occur in hospitals, university research centers, community clinics and physicians' offices.

Observational studies review what occurs when people follow a certain treatment or behavior. Example: Researchers might compare the health of people who exercise every day with the health of those who don't exercise routinely.

Randomized trials help determine if treatments or diagnostic tests are effective. Example: A trial might compare diabetic patients with implanted insulin pumps against diabetic patients (control group) who receive multiple insulin injections.

Cohort studies involve a research design that follows large groups of people typically for a long period of time. Researchers use data from cohort studies to understand human health and the environmental and social factors that influence it.

When researching the data available, keep in mind that one study rarely provides a scientific standard of proof. Take the time to compare various reports for a more thorough understanding.

Q: What is cardiomyopathy?

A: **Cardiomyopathy is a heart muscle disorder.** The condition can weaken your heart muscle and make it harder for it to pump blood throughout your body. Viral illnesses, such as COVID-19, can cause cardiomyopathy as can heart attacks, heart valve problems and high blood pressure. Other culprits include obesity, diabetes, thyroid disease and drug or alcohol abuse. Genetic factors may play a role.

Signs and symptoms: Cardiomyopathy can cause shortness of breath, swelling of the legs or feet, abdominal bloating and coughing or trouble breathing while lying down. Other symptoms include fatigue, chest discomfort, palpitations or dizziness. Contact your health care provider if you have these symptoms. Call 911 if you experience severe breathlessness, fainting or chest pain lasting more than a few minutes.

Health care options: Treatments for cardiomyopathy include medications, surgery or, more rarely, heart transplantation. Lifestyle measures can help manage this condition. Losing excess weight, quitting smoking, restricting salt, avoiding alcohol and exercising with your health care provider's guidance may provide protection and benefits. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Overcome That Exercise Plateau



Hitting an exercise plateau is frustrating.

Does this sound familiar? After exercising regularly for weeks or months, you've improved your stamina and lost a few unwanted pounds. But you're not seeing more weight loss, more muscle definition or the ability to run or bike faster — signs you've reached an exercise plateau.

Don't despair. Hitting a fitness plateau means you've improved your fitness, up to a point.

You can overcome the plateau by remembering FITT, which stands for these exercise principles to help you overcome an exercise plateau:

- **F is for frequency.** If you've been working out three times a week, add another session.
- **I is for intensity.** Are you coasting along on your workouts? It's time to rev up your heart rate, if you are free of cardiac problems, to 65% to 90% of the heart rate maximum for your age (with your health care provider's okay). Check out the American Heart Association's (AHA) target heart rates chart for more information at [heart.org](https://www.heart.org).
- **T is for time.** Did you reach your exercise plateau after 20- to 30-minute exercise sessions? Increase the time you work out from 30 to 60 minutes.
- **T is for type of exercise.** Simply adding variety to your workouts can be key to overcoming your exercise plateau. Consider a host of other exercises you may not have tried yet, such as biking, swimming, tennis and resistance training with weights, while making aerobic activities central to workouts, according to the AHA.

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) suggests considering a personal trainer for at least a session or two to help you find new exercise routines and check your form as you work to get fitter. But don't overdo it; ACE also emphasizes getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated and exploring ways to have fun as you overcome your exercise plateau.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Health Benefits of Volunteering**, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V9tools.

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