

Foods and Supplements That Protect Against Cancer

My top anti-cancer choices

If you are confused about whether certain vitamins, supplements or foods can prevent cancer, you're not alone. The results of several recent studies have been conflicting and perplexing—which is why this topic has raised questions for consumers as well as members of the health-care and research communities.

What you need to know: Cancer is not a single disease, and it can have many different causes. That makes it virtually impossible for any one nutrient to protect against all types of cancer. In fact, studying whether single nutrients reduce the risk for cancer often is like looking for a magic bullet—more wishful thinking than good science. Nothing can absolutely guarantee that you'll remain cancer-free. However, good nutrition and a healthful overall lifestyle—not smoking, not abusing alcohol, limiting exposure to pollutants, eliminating food additives and controlling stress—can lower your odds of developing cancer.

Consume a diet that emphasizes a variety of fresh, natural and minimally processed foods. Include a selection of vegetables, some fruits (such as berries and kiwifruit), fish, chicken (free range or organic), legumes, nuts and modest amounts of healthful starches (such as sweet potatoes and whole grains). Eat healthfully—and you will lay the foundation for everything else that you can do to lower your long-term risk for cancer.

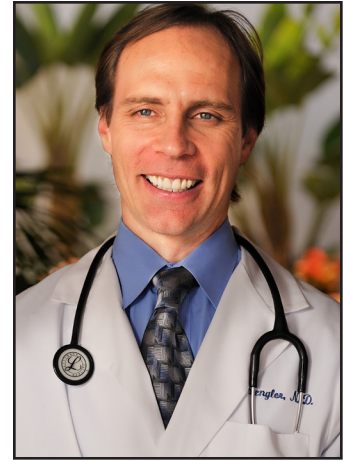
My Top 5 Anti-Cancer Foods

1. Broccoli. Cruciferous vegetables are my top anti-cancer food, and broccoli heads the list. It is rich in *sulforaphane*, an antioxidant that helps the liver break down and destroy cancer-causing toxins. Sulforaphane also increases the activity of liver enzymes that help to get cancerous substances out of the body. (Sulforaphane also is available as a supplement, although I recommend people get this phytonutrient through food.) Even better, **broccoli sprouts contain 50 times more sulforaphane than that found in regular broccoli.** A product called **BroccoSprouts** is available at select supermarkets (www.broccospouts.com). Broccoli sprouts also have been shown to fight *H. pylori*, a type of bacteria believed to cause stomach cancer. (See the June 2009 issue of *Bottom Line Natural Healing* for more details about cancer protection from broccoli sprouts.)

Advice: Eat one-half cup of raw or lightly steamed broccoli daily. (Boiling reduces its nutritional value.) Add some broccoli sprouts to your salads or sandwiches.

2. Tomatoes. This fruit is rich in *lycopene*, the antioxidant that gives tomatoes their red color. Studies have found that tomatoes reduce the risk for prostate cancer—and also might reduce the risk for lung and stomach cancers.

Advice: Consume cooked tomatoes or tomato sauce. Lycopene is best absorbed from cooked tomatoes because cooking breaks down the fiber in the tomatoes. A little fat (e.g., olive oil) also enhances absorption. Include one serving of tomato sauce (one-half cup) in your diet several times a week. Watermelon and guava also contain a lot of lycopene.



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3. Cold-water fish. Salmon, sardines and trout are rich in healthy omega-3 fats—specifically eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). EPA and DHA have potent anti-inflammatory benefits. Low intake of these fats appears to be a factor in breast, colon, pancreatic and stomach cancers.

Advice: Eat cold-water fish at least once or twice a week, or take a fish oil supplement daily that contains 1 gram of EPA and DHA. Or, use krill oil, a type of fish oil from shrimplike crustaceans.

4. Garlic. Slice or dice a garlic clove, and a relatively inert compound called allicin undergoes an amazing cascade of chemical changes. Nearly all allicin-generated compounds function as antioxidants that prevent the types of cell mutations that give rise to cancer. Evidence suggests that garlic might help protect against cancers of the colon, prostate, esophagus, larynx, ovaries and kidneys.

Advice: Regularly consume garlic. Because chopping and cooking garlic seems to increase its biological activity, sauté or bake rather than eating it whole or raw. There is no recommended serving size for garlic, but the more you consume, the better.

5. Spinach. Spinach and other “greens,” such as chard and collard greens, are rich in antioxidants that protect cells from the type of damage that can create cancerous mutations. One study published in *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* gave spinach the top “bioactivity index” ranking of vegetables for its ability to protect against cancer.

Advice: Eat spinach and other greens daily. You can make spinach salads or 50/50 lettuce and spinach salads, or gently sauté spinach. A single serving is equivalent to one cup of raw or one-half cup of cooked spinach or greens. (*Reference: Bottom Line Natural Healing with Dr. Mark Stengler*)