

February is Cancer Prevention Month: Help Prevent with your Diet

We can go to almost any store these days and find a product that claims to have cancer prevention properties. And, some of those claims may be true. However, the best way to help prevent cancer is through your regular diet and exercise, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research. “If Americans moved more, weighed less and ate more healthfully, there are about 340,000 cancers every year that would’ve never had to happen”. Those number increase if you cut out smoking and sun damage.

So, what can you do to get started?

It doesn’t take drastic measures to see change. Making small changes in your everyday choices is a great way to get on the right track. Begin to focus on things like the amount of whole grains you are consuming and your portion sizes instead of just counting calories. Pay attention to the nutrition facts label and begin to incorporate foods containing phytochemicals.

Phytochemicals are naturally occurring plant chemicals that provide plants with their color, odor and flavor. Once humans consume them, they can influence chemical processes in our body in positive ways. These positive influences include: stimulating the immune system, reduce types of inflammation that can contribute to cancer growth, help to regulate hormones and slow the growth rate of cancer cells.

To begin incorporating these positive changes, start including your daily recommended servings of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Work with your doctor or visit choosemyplate.gov to determine the correct amounts of each food group.

In order to not get “stuck in a rut” with your diet, try mixing it up with fruits and veggies you don’t normally consume. There are many unique recipes available to make your daily meals not only nutritious but also delicious.

While there is no one miracle cancer fighting food, but there is strong evidence supporting diets high in a variety of plant foods. Some of the most popular include: apples, berries, cruciferous veggies like broccoli and cauliflower, dark green leafy vegetables, tomatoes, walnuts and even green tea. Not only are these great for fighting cancer but they also contain many other beneficial vitamins and minerals.

Consider trying spinach, a dark green leafy vegetable, in a new way this week. Add it to wraps, casseroles, pizza or sauté it with other vegetables for a quiche or stir fry medley. You can also try this spinach and egg wrap recipe. Accompany it with the fresh, homemade dressing and have a fresh, cancer fighting lunch without spending too much time in the kitchen.

For more recipe ideas or information on cancer prevention cooking, visit extension.uga.edu or contact me at boothc@uga.edu.

UGA Extension in Family and Consumer Sciences will be hosting a Cooking for a Lifetime of Cancer Prevention cooking school. Cost is free to attend. Participants will learn about cancer prevention cooking tips and sample recipes from the Cooking for a Lifetime cookbook. Registration is limited so please call or email to find out more information.

Sources: American Institute for Cancer Research and UGA Extension