

7 Foods that Decrease Cancer Risk

LISA ANDREWS, MED, RD, LD

We do know that there is a positive association between processed and red meat and cancer as well as alcohol intake and risk for multiple types of cancer including esophagus, breast, liver, pancreas, head and neck, and colorectal cancer (1).

Lettuce focus on what we **should** eat to prevent cancer:



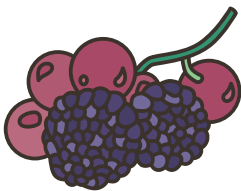
1: Green Leafy and Cruciferous Vegetables

Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, kale, spinach. These contain sulforaphane, vitamin C, vitamins, polyphenols, sulfides, glucosinolates, and other phytochemicals to protect against cancer (2).



2: Green Tea and Cocoa-Based Beverages

These beverages contain flavonoids, compounds found to have anticancer effects (3).



3: Berries and Other Fruit

These colorful gems provide vitamins, minerals, fiber, flavonoids, and other bioactive compounds and are linked with the reduction of breast and other cancers (4).



4: Whole Grains

Whole grains aid in weight management, which is important in reducing the risk of cancer. Fiber in whole grains also positively impacts the gut microbiome, which affects immunity (5).



5: Nuts and Tree Nuts

Nuts and tree nuts—an inexpensive staple in several dietary patterns, nuts, and tree nuts have been linked with an overall reduction in cancer mortality, specifically colon and pancreatic cancer (6).



6: Beans and Lentils

Beans and lentils—these fiber and protein-packed plants have been linked with the reduction of cancer as well as heart disease and diabetes. They're also inexpensive and versatile (7).



7: Soy

A recent meta-analysis found a protective effect with soy isoflavone intake and the risk of breast cancer and pre- and post-menopausal women. Researchers caution against isoflavone supplements. Like other nutrients, it's best to get it from food versus pills (8).

Sources:

1. Farvid MS, Sidahmed E, Spence ND, Mante Angua K, Rosner BA, Barnett JB. Consumption of red meat and processed meat and cancer incidence: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies. *Eur J Epidemiol.* 2021 Sep;36(9):937–951. doi: 10.1007/s10654-021-00741-9. Epub 2021 Aug 29. PMID: 34455534.
2. Nandini DB, Rao RS, Deepak BS, Reddy PB. Sulforaphane in broccoli: The green chemoprevention!! Role in cancer prevention and therapy. *J Oral Maxillofac Pathol.* 2020 May–Aug;24(2):405. doi: 10.4103/jomfp.JOMFP_126_19. Epub 2020 Sep 9. PMID: 33456268; PMCID: PMC7802872.
3. Kopustinskiene DM, Jakstas V, Savickas A, Bernatoniene J. Flavonoids as Anticancer Agents. *Nutrients.* 2020 Feb 12;12(2):457. doi: 10.3390/nu12020457. PMID: 32059369; PMCID: PMC7071196.
4. Golovinskaia O, Wang CK. Review of Functional and Pharmacological Activities of Berries. *Molecules.* 2021 Jun 25;26(13):3904. doi: 10.3390/molecules26133904. PMID: 34202412; PMCID: PMC8271923.
5. López-Plaza B, Loria-Kohen V, González-Rodríguez LG, Fernández-Cruz E. Alimentación y estilo de vida en la prevención del cáncer [Diet and lifestyle in cancer prevention]. *Nutr Hosp.* 2022 Sep 1;39(Spec No3):74–77. Spanish. doi: 10.20960/nh.04317. PMID: 36040006.
6. Naghshi S, Sadeghian M, Nasiri M, Mobarak S, Asadi M, Sadeghi O. Association of Total Nut, Tree Nut, Peanut, and Peanut Butter Consumption with Cancer Incidence and Mortality: A Comprehensive Systematic Review and Dose-Response Meta-Analysis of Observational Studies. *Adv Nutr.* 2021 Jun 1;12(3):793–808. doi: 10.1093/advances/nmaa152. PMID: 33307550; PMCID: PMC8166551.
7. Papandreou C, Becerra-Tomás N, Bulló M, Martínez-González MÁ, Corella D, Estruch R, Ros E, Arós F, Schroder H, Fitó M, Serra-Majem L, Lapetra J, Fiol M, Ruiz-Canela M, Sorli JV, Salas-Salvadó J. Legume consumption and risk of all-cause, cardiovascular, and cancer mortality in the PREDIMED study. *Clin Nutr.* 2019 Feb;38(1):348–356. doi: 10.1016/j.clnu.2017.12.019. Epub 2018 Jan 9. PMID: 29352655.
8. Boutas I, Kontogeorgi A, Dimitrakakis C, Kalantaridou SN. Soy Isoflavones and Breast Cancer Risk: A Meta-analysis. *In Vivo.* 2022 Mar–Apr;36(2):556–562. doi: 10.21873/invivo.12737. PMID: 35241506; PMCID: PMC8931889.